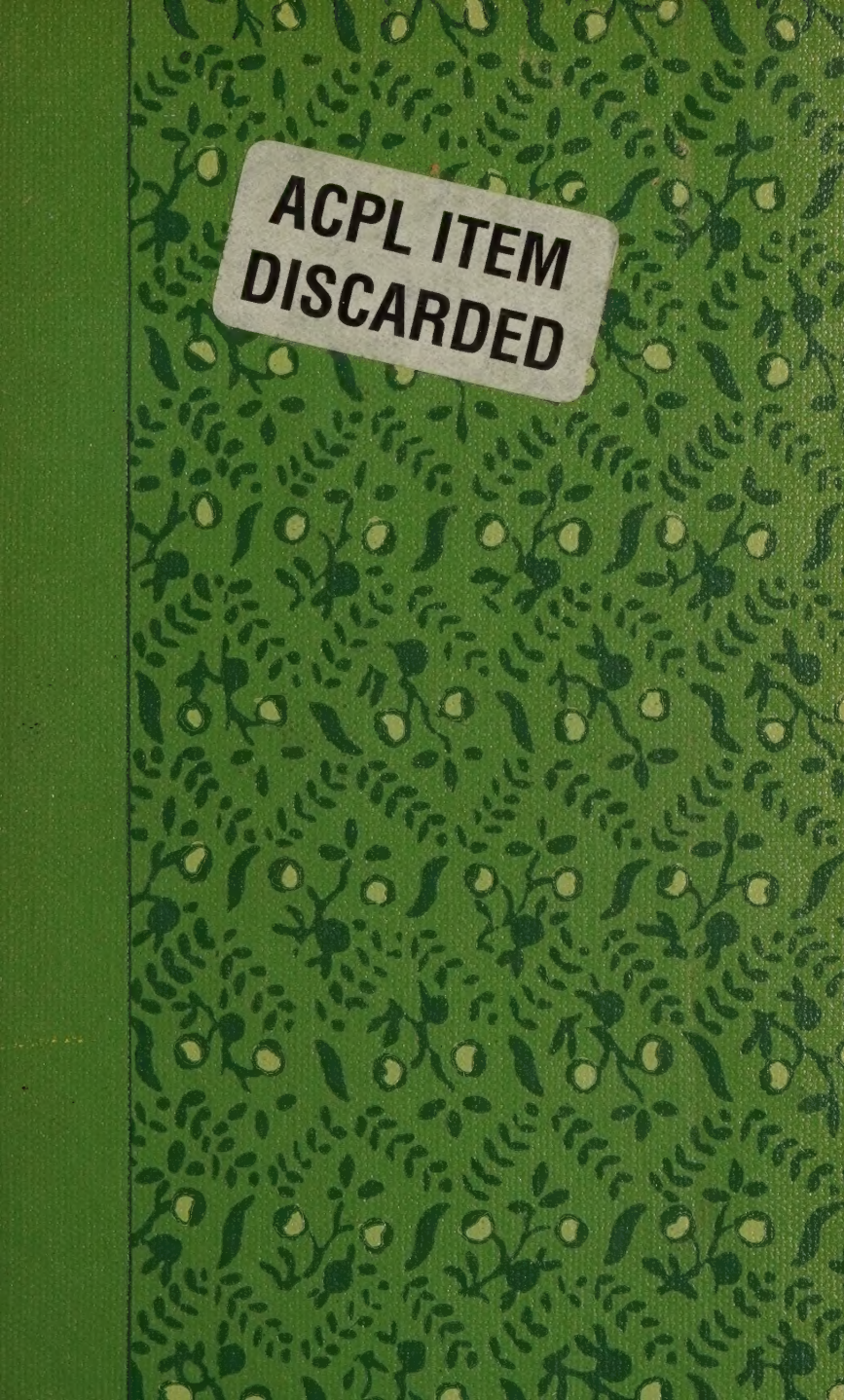


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I.—PRIMITIVE RELIGION

CHAPTER I

RELIGIOUS ORIGINS

THE starting-point of Religion can only be surmised. It lies buried in the distant past, many ages before the discovery of writing. Any information about it is mainly provided by anthropology, by the comparative method applied to religions, and by psychology.

Anthropology, in treating of savagery and folklore—*i.e.* traces of savagery which survive in civilization—gives us some conception of the life and beliefs of primitive man. The outlook of the present-day savage represents a retarded stage in the social and religious progress which mankind has achieved. We cannot, however, preclude the possibility that savagery has, in some cases, degenerated from more advanced stages. Moreover, even the lowest savage to-day is certainly a highly developed individual when compared with man in his absolutely pristine state: for instance, he is steeped in tradition, which his prototype was not. In spite of such differences the life of the modern savage may be regarded as approximating to that which prevailed in the earliest days of the human race.

The comparative method teaches us what religious conceptions are fundamental. Some elements in the rites and beliefs of civilized peoples retain evidence of their barbarous origin. As examples among the cultured Greeks and Romans, we may instance the savage rites of Attis, and the beliefs underlying the sacramental

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meals of all the Mystery Religions. Such beliefs are not dead to-day. Their persistence indicates that they satisfy needs deeply rooted in the heart of mankind. No doubt, traces of the most primitive conceptions of religion have been preserved in them.

Psychology, by establishing the similarity of the working of the human mind in all races of men, confirms the legitimacy of the comparative method. Furthermore, it is as true in psychology as in embryology that the history of the evolution of the race is epitomized in that of the individual. Hence, in the attitude of the child towards religion, we have an indication of the attitude towards it of primitive man. With these preliminary remarks, we may commence our hypothetical reconstruction of the rise and progress of religion.

There once was a period when man was but one of the higher mammals. His life at that time was completely dominated by the three fundamental impulses which prompt a man to live gregariously, to preserve, and to reproduce himself : *i.e.* the instincts of the herd, of nutrition, and of reproduction. These impulses were satisfied then, as they are to-day among the lower animals, without the co-operation of reason. It is impossible, even in the development of the individual child, to mark the exact point where instinct passes up into intelligence, and intelligence into reason. We may, however, be quite certain that man passed from the stage of an intelligent animal, living largely by instinct, into that of a reasoning being, as soon as he learned to talk. By the aid of language, ideas can be more readily retained, after the actual experiences which suggested them are passed ; and they can be expressed, and, eventually, developed by argument.

Thus we can picture primitive man, after the dawn of speech, discussing the objects around him and the forces of nature which were operative in the universe in which he found himself.

Facts which, from the first, must have excited man's attention and demanded an explanation were such as the following : the nature of existence, cause and effect, dreams, the origin of the first human pair, death, and the gregarious life of man with its laws and rites.

It appears that the existence of natural objects seemed to the reflection of primitive man to be of the same character as his own, *i.e.* of a "personal" character. Accordingly he personified all the objects of nature. A spring, a tree, a fire, a stone, were all endowed with personal attributes. This outlook upon life has been called "naturism," or "implicit animism." It is logically the simplest form of belief. It differs from "explicit animism" in that it identifies the soul or spirit with the material object. Naturism forms the basis of most religions. Its ascription of human emotions, intentions and powers, to inanimate things marks a phase in mankind's outlook upon life through which we all pass. The child believes that its doll is endowed with the attributes of an infant. Even the grown man will, under the stress of anger, express himself in language which, logically, can only mean that he is momentarily crediting a pen, a broken lace, or a golf club with the inimical intentions of a perverse human being. This shows how deeply rooted is "naturism" in the mind of man.

The connection between cause and effect, in the case of regularly occurring phenomena, would not perhaps at first call forth the intelligent recognition of early humanity. The succession might be regarded as

“mechanical” (*cf.* Chapter II. pp. 13 f.). When, however, the usual sequence of expectation was broken, some definite reason to account for the unlooked-for event would inevitably be sought, and be eventually given. For instance, primitive man is accustomed to use water. One day he bathes when he is in a heat. Erysipelas or some other disease follows. This appears to him to be mysterious. It is contrary to his usual experience. He cannot ascribe the disease to the water itself, because it has not previously treated him thus. He therefore draws the conclusion that the misfortune is due to the evil agency of a spirit which now exists in the water. Such a belief in spirits, which differentiates them from the material in which they are regarded as dwelling, is called “explicit animism.”

Explicit animism must soon have arisen ¹ in the mind of man as the result of his experience in dreams, and as an outcome of the questionings which would be suggested by death. Even the higher animals dream; so that dreams were among the earliest experiences of mankind which seemed to point to an independent existence of the soul or spirit. For primitive man doubtless explained his dreams by the theory that the sleeper wandered away from his body and actually visited the places, saw the persons, and performed the acts about which he dreamed. This belief is not uncommon among savages to-day. Frazer cites the case of a Mausi Indian in weak health, who dreamed that his employer had compelled him to haul the canoe up a series of difficult cataracts. On waking the next

¹ The sporadic belief in a “High God,” which is held by savages in various parts of the world, does not show that Animism is a degeneration from a primitive Monotheism (*cf.* Jevons, *Comparative Religion*, pp. 118 ff.). These “High Gods” are probably the sole remaining survivals of tribal deities.

morning he bitterly reproached his master for his want of consideration in thus making a poor invalid go out to toil during the night. The same writer mentions many curious consequences of this belief in the absence of the soul during sleep. A sleeper must not be moved, lest the soul should not find the body on its return. Nor should a sleeper be suddenly awakened, lest the soul should not have time to get back. If the soul fails to return, the result is death. Death is regarded among primitive peoples as the permanent absence of the soul from the body. In the case of sickness they resort to many singular methods for the purpose of inducing the soul not to take its departure, such as stopping up the bodily orifices, etc. The soul is conceived as a semi-ethereal counterpart of the body. The idea that it ceases to exist at death is one which does not seem to be entertained by the primitive mind. This is not surprising, as a dream about a dead person would, according to the beliefs about dreams which are held by such thinkers, appear to offer conclusive proof of the continued existence of the spirit or soul of the dead. Belief in the reality of the happenings which occurred in dreams was especially widespread where the dream had to do with divine persons. Thus, among the Greeks, diseases were healed by a revelation of the deity accorded in dreams to the patients. Votive tablets commemorating such cures have been discovered on the site of the ancient sanctuary of Æsculapius at Epidaurus, and elsewhere. In the "E" document of the Old Testament one of the chief ways in which God reveals Himself to the Patriarchs is by "appearing in a dream by night." In the Mystery Religions, too, the dream was one of the recognized methods by which divine revelation was imparted.

The mystic slept in the temple, after first receiving preparatory suggestions as to what he would experience there. Josephus records how the priests of Isis at Rome abused this belief to compass the seduction of a Roman lady by a lover who disguised himself as the god Anubis.¹ The fact that Paulina "declared among her friends how great a value she put upon this favour" without fear of ridicule, shows that it was commonly believed that the gods did appear to their initiates when they slept in their temples.

One of the most interesting chapters in modern psychology dates from Freud's theory about dreams. This theory has given dreams a totally different but hardly less important place in the life of the individual by showing how they arise from unsatisfied desires and repressions in the unconscious. The dream is still a revelation, but it is now a revelation of the dreamer's unconscious self.

An interesting example of the curiosity—the fore-runner of the modern spirit of scientific research—which is inherent in the mind of man, is provided by the numerous answers that have been given to the question, "How did man originate?" These answers reflect the naïve thinking of the race in its childhood, and probably go back to remote antiquity. They are found in almost every part of the globe, and often closely resemble that given in the second chapter of Genesis. It is usually held that man was moulded by the Great Artificer from the clay of the ground, and that he became a living soul when the Divine Being breathed into his nostrils. Woman was formed in the same way, or, according to some versions, from the man's rib. This theory of human origin predominated

¹ *Ant.* 18. 3. 4.

in Asia and Europe. But in America, Africa, and certain parts of Australasia, stories are told which show that there mankind was thought to have been evolved from lower forms of life.¹

By primitive peoples death is generally regarded as a disaster which is due to some baneful agency.² Such a belief is perhaps a legacy from the times when the struggle for life was so bitter that most men succumbed when their faculties were but little impaired. The desire to avoid this calamity must have been a great stimulus to the practice of magic and religion. The early Semites seem to have believed that man might have been immortal had not the craft and subtlety of the serpent deprived him of that blessing. Stories containing a similar conception are not uncommon.¹ In these death is represented as coming upon mankind through the malicious treachery of some animal who thus secures the gift of eternal life which had been intended for men. The animal is frequently a serpent or a lizard, *i.e.* one which casts its skin; the casting of the skin being looked upon, in early times, as the process of becoming immortal.

The influence of these primitive ideas upon Christianity, through the medium of Judaism and St. Paul's doctrine of the Fall and "Second Adam," has been considerable.

Once men had begun to reflect upon the problems of life, one of the phenomena which attracted notice must have been the gregarious nature of their existence; indeed, the savage mind takes little cognizance of the other, the individual side of life. Hence, when reason started to replace instinct and mere intelligence, the

¹ Cf. *Folk-Lore in O.T.*, vol. i. pp. 3-77.

² *Ibid.*, vol. iii. p. 314.

question inevitably arose—in the subconsciousness at least—"Why did man conform to the laws of the herd in which he found himself?" One answer appears to have been that the herd, or tribe, had a common bond, such as a "totem." A totem may be an animal or plant; it embodies the solidarity and unity of the tribe, with every member of which its life is mysteriously connected. In some cases the basis of communal life was conceived of as a spirit, rather than under the form of a totemic symbol. A spirit of this sort must be distinguished from those lesser beings created by animism (*vide* pp. 5, 6). *He* was the tribal deity and could be approached only by the community; but *they* were independent entities and might be cajoled by the individual for anti-social purposes.

The fact that primitive man was—or, at a very early stage became—gregarious, involves a recognition on his part of rules of conduct towards his fellows, *i.e.* of moral law. It is therefore impossible to agree with such writers as Pfleiderer, who maintain that "moral conduct in man had its beginnings in religious faith and religious rites." At the most it may be conceded that both morals and religion have their roots in primary instincts, the herd instinct and the fear instinct being among the more important.

Fear still plays a large part in religion. Shakespeare, with characteristic insight, makes the shipwrecked mariners rush up on deck with the cry, "All lost! to prayers, to prayers! all lost!"¹ The nearer we get back to man in his primitive condition (*e.g.* by studying the modern savage), the larger does fear bulk in his religious outlook. Indeed, it is most probable

¹ *Tempest*, I. i.

that the elemental emotion in which religious faith took its rise was fear or awe, a sense of *mana* as the Polynesians now term it, *i.e.* of a power, great, mysterious, and pervasive, upon which, nevertheless, man could lay hold, and in alliance with which he could face the world with confidence and courage.¹

It has sometimes been asked whether all religions go back to one common ancestor. Anthropologists are fairly agreed that, even if man may have descended from an original pair of human or pre-human parents, yet language came into existence at different places on the earth. It is highly likely that the same happened in the case of religion, since, as we have seen, the growth of religion is closely bound up with that of language.

Such a number of different beginnings of religion as this theory supposes allows a measure of justification for the great diversity of views which have been maintained as to the basis of religion in man's mind. Sir E. B. Tyler, in *Primitive Culture*, emphasizes animism as the main constituent of primitive religion. "Religion," he says, "is a belief in spiritual beings";² and this belief he investigates under the name of "animism."³ Crawley, in the *Tree of Life*, says, "The vital instinct, the feeling of life, is the source of, or rather identical with, the religious impulse, is the origin of religion."⁴ This is a definition which is too broad to be of much value. Grant Allen, in his *Evolution of the Idea of God*, gives an attractive exposition of the theory that religion originated in the worship of dead ancestors.⁵ Frazer, in *The Golden Bough*, states as his belief that "fear of

¹ Cf. Pringle-Pattison, "Gifford Lectures, 1923."

² *Op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 424.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 425 f.

⁴ *Op. cit.*, p. 214.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, pp. 31-37, 91.

the human dead " was one of the most powerful factors.¹ Jevons maintains that " Fear (of calamity) is the emotion most operative in the early history of religion." ² More recently, the sense of *mana*, of which we have already spoken, has been regarded as the basis of religious belief.

All these may, with equal probability, be regarded as the basis of the belief in magic. In fact, the difference between religion and magic was originally hardly recognizable. This will appear in the next chapter in discussing the relations between them.

¹ *G.B.*, p. vii.

² *Comparative Religions*, p. 20.

CHAPTER II

THE RELATION BETWEEN RELIGION AND MAGIC

1. A VIEW which regards magic as earlier than religion is ably presented by Sir J. G. Frazer. He looks upon magic as a primitive and false form of modern science. The early magician, like the scientist of to-day, believed in the universal reign of law. But the laws upon which the magician based his procedure were the mistaken ones which state that "like produces like," and that "things that have once been in contact with each other continue to act upon each other at a distance, after the physical contact has been severed." The first law gives rise to homœopathic or imitative magic. Thus, all over the world it seems to have been believed and in many places still is believed that, by making a model of one's enemy and inflicting injuries upon it, the actual man himself would suffer a pain in the corresponding part of his body. The second law gives rise to contagious magic. It persists to-day in many parts of Britain. An example of it is to be found in the sympathetic relation which is commonly believed to exist between a wounded person and the agent of the wound. Thus, "in Suffolk, if a horse wounds its foot by treading on a nail, the groom will invariably preserve the nail, clean it, and grease it every day, to prevent the foot from festering." ¹

¹ *G.B.*, p. 42.

Frazer defines religion as "a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of nature and of human life." He therefore concludes that magic arose before religion in the evolution of our race. For religion involves a conception of conscious agents behind the scenes, and thus "is more abstruse and recondite, and requires for its apprehension a far higher degree of intelligence and reflection than the view (of magic) that things succeed each other simply by reason of their contiguity or resemblance."¹ The fallacy of magic would not be easy to discover. In many cases magic would appear to work. In some, where human beings alone were involved, it actually did work through the process of suggestion. But such things as the seasons could not be affected by suggestion; and at last "a tardy recognition of the inherent falsehood and barrenness of magic set the more thoughtful part of mankind to cast about for a truer theory of nature and a more fruitful method of turning her resources to account."² The ultimate causes of things were then ascribed to personal beings. These were not regarded as vastly transcending humanity, but, as it were, deified men, wielding powers corresponding to those of the displaced magician. The rainfall, the sunshine, the recurrence of the seasons, and the changes and chances of life, thus came to be regarded, not as the results of man's own magic ceremonies, but as due to the work of these mightier powers. "Men now pictured to themselves the growth and decay of vegetation, the birth and death of living creatures, as effects of the waxing and waning strength of divine beings, of

¹ *G.B.*, p. 54.

² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

gods and goddesses, who were born and died, who married and begot children, on the pattern of human life.”¹ But man still believed that he could aid these deities in their labours. On the old principle that like produces like, he supposed that, by a dramatic representation of the changes in the life of the deity—for instance, a representation of the divine birth, marriage, death, burial, or revival—the life-cycle of the deity would be accelerated. Thus the annual return of the seasons, which was supposed to depend upon this cycle, could be facilitated and hastened.

2. A second view is that magic is a degenerate form of religion. This is maintained by Dr. Otto Pfleiderer and by Prof. Doutré. They believe that men began by thinking that they were able to assist the gods by going through a pantomimic representation of the desired end. Later, when the original conception which underlay such rites was no longer understood, the same processes were continued and regarded as having a magical effect, *i.e.* an effect *ex opere operato*. “So the initial naïve-religious ceremonies of worship might be the cause and origin of what was later actual ‘magic’; and, therefore, the latter is not a beginning, but a degeneration of religion, for in it man does not act in the service of the god and for his purposes, but without the god and against him man desires to achieve his own purposes by mysterious means.”²

3. The origin of religion and magic is the same. This view is well expressed by E. S. Hartland in *Ritual and Belief*. He maintains (pp. 26 ff.) that religion and magic “grew from a common root.” This root is the play instincts of man and the secondary forms of his emotional expression. “Action is natural

¹ *G.B.*, p. 324.

² *Religion and Historic Faiths*, p. 79.

to the savage. Thought which has no immediate objective action is strange. . . . Play satisfies this craving (for action) . . . and this form of activity, organized into dances and games, easily begets ritual.”¹ Now ritual belongs both to magic and to religion. On this view then, both are regarded as derived from the play instincts of primitive man, from “unideated discharges of social energy.”² As soon as primitive man began to contemplate and give a reasoned explanation of these play and mimic activities, we have the beginnings of religion and magic. Hartland notices elsewhere a somewhat different expression of human energy, which contributed to the evolution of ritual. “Make-belief is a relief to our overcharged feelings. . . . It can hardly be doubted that many rites have their existence in such reactions.”³

R. R. Marett and Irving King tend to agree with this view of a common origin for the rites of religion and magic. “Rites are prior to beliefs,” says Dr. Irving King (*The Development of Religion*), “in so far as religion and magic have elements which are similar functionally: they originally formed part of a primitive, undifferentiated attitude, and separated from each other as experience became more complex and the requirements more varied.” Dr. R. R. Marett (*Anthropology*) says: “Magic and religion belong to the same department of human experience. . . . Magic, I take to include all bad ways, religion all good ways, of dealing with the supernormal. Meaning, by ‘good’ and ‘bad,’ these things as the society judges them.” (p. 209).

¹ *Ritual and Belief*, p. 115.

² Cf. R. R. Marett, *Dict. of Religion and Ethics*, vol. viii. p. 246.

³ *Ritual and Belief*, p. 116.

It will be noticed that there is a general agreement on these two points—

1. Magic is morally inferior to religion.
2. Magic conveys the notion of power wielded by the magician as his own. If spirits are involved in the conception, they are compelled, not entreated, to obey. Moreover, most writers regard magic as anti-social and religion as social in tendency.

At what conclusions are we to arrive in face of the different views which have been mentioned, which, indeed, are but the principal among many? Criticism of Frazer's theory, based upon the rites celebrated by the central Australians,¹ does not appear particularly convincing. The religion of the Blackfellows is not pure magic as these critics have supposed. It would appear, however, that Frazer's theory does not allow sufficient weight to the personal element of the magician. A more powerful magician is a person with something more than a mere additional knowledge of the mechanical laws of cause and effect. He is one who possesses a more powerful "orenda." This idea of orenda, *i.e.* of a kind of personal magnetism, is inherent in the savage mind. Thus, if a savage transfixes his foe with a spear, he regards the feat as the result of the superior power of his orenda, and of his spear's orenda, over those of his enemy. This same orenda can accomplish such a desired injury even when his foe is absent, a pantomimic act being regarded as the necessary means.² Again, Frazer's theory postulates magic as being earlier than religion, and says that magic arose from an association of ideas by means of similarity and contact. But

¹ Cf., for example, Crawley, *Tree of Life*, pp. 192 ff.

² Cf. Marett, *Threshold of Religion*, pp. 44 ff.

the outcome of the play instincts and the actions which result from overcharged emotions do not even involve the thought required to mark the laws of similarity and contiguity. Hence we may regard the automatic actions which result from the play instincts and from overcharged emotions as the basis of the earliest rites, both of magic and religion.

If magic and religion have a common origin, how is it that magic has fallen into disrepute? It is to be noticed that, whilst any rites which sprang from the play instincts would have only a social tendency, yet those which originated from the "make-belief which results from overcharged feelings" may possess either a social or an anti-social tendency. Happy feelings make even twentieth-century man desire to mingle with and to benefit his kind. Feelings of anger, on the other hand, will make him seek solitude, and perhaps express his emotions in mimic actions of a vindictive character. Such actions bear a suggestive resemblance to those of the savage who sticks pins into the piece of wax or wood which he identifies with his foe. It would appear that, in the course of evolution, the rites of religion have appropriated all social manifestations of such "make-belief" and of such "emotional discharge," and that magic has been gradually left with only their anti-social manifestations. This part of magic, which is largely derived from "secondary emotional discharges of the expletive order," has thus come to be characteristic of the whole.

Magic and religion, then, commenced life together, but the anti-social tendency in magic has prevented it from developing *pari passu* with religion. Religion has advanced as the conception of the deity which it

enshrined has become more sublime. Magic has had no such uplifting force. Like religion, it is "one way of facing the unknown, of restoring men's confidence when it is shaken by crisis"; but, whereas religion proves its validity by leading man to a realization of his destiny in the world and helping him to fulfil it, magic is barren and harmful. Yet magic and religion are, in practice, inextricably mingled. The sacrament, *i.e.* the rite whereby the worshipper obtains certain benefits by fulfilling a covenant made with him by God, easily becomes debased into a magical performance whereby man believes that he obtains these benefits because he knows the means of compelling the deity to grant them. The prayer ever tends to degenerate into the spell, *i.e.* a form of compulsion, in which mere correctness of repetition, a constant use of the Divine name, and a knowledge of the Divine origin become essentials. Veneration of relics, of the "host," and the like are all characteristic of magic, though masquerading as religion. It is obvious that magic still exercises an important influence upon mankind. It cannot be dismissed as—in Tylor's words—"a whole farrago of nonsense."¹ It is, indeed, a menace to civilization. Frazer has drawn a graphic picture of the universality and of the danger of this belief in magic. "It is beneath our feet—and not very far beneath them—here in Europe at the present day, and it crops up on the surface in the heart of the Australian wilderness, and wherever the advent of a higher civilization has not crushed it under ground. . . . If a test of the truth lay in a show of hands, the system of magic might appeal, with far more reason than the Catholic

¹ *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 133.

Church, to the proud motto, *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, as the sure and certain credential of its own infallibility.”¹

From this investigation into the beginnings of religion we see how its beliefs and rites may be regarded as originating from instincts inherent in the human mind. These beginnings were, at first, far from exalted. The highest type of religious belief and of religious rite which existed among primitive man would doubtless appear, from our standpoint, as gross superstition and undiluted magic. But, as Mr. Marett and M. Durkheim have argued, we have no right to exclude these from the category of religion, since the emotions which they aroused, and the effects which they produced in the savage, were similar in important respects to those which religion produces in his civilized successor.

We will now trace the evolution of religion through its tribal and national stages to the universal outlook which prevailed in certain sections of Judaism and in the Græco-Oriental mystery religions at the dawn of our era.

¹ *G.B.*, p. 56.

CHAPTER III

THE DEVELOPMENT OF PRIMITIVE RELIGION AMONG TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

TRIBAL religion represents the stage in religious progress corresponding to the patriarchal and nomadic stage in the social evolution of mankind. We have no written records of this period. Life was too precarious to afford the leisure which the attainment of such an accomplishment as writing requires. The satisfaction of man's primary needs, of getting food and begetting children, occupied every moment of his "directed" effort. Although there is no historical testimony of the period under consideration, yet we possess traditions which go back to the tribal stage of religious evolution. The Old Testament contains many such traditions. They are chiefly in the J and E documents, and are now found largely overlaid by the opinions of the "priestly" school of writers. The books collected under Homer's name give us a picture, painted in "heroic" colours, of the early life of the peoples living round the Ægean Sea.

The religious ideas which prevailed at this stage may be considered under the following heads :

1. The Deity.
2. The Worship.
3. The Significance of Blood.
4. Taboo.
5. Fear of Demons.

1. The deity was a personification of clan solidarity. For religion was a communal affair; it may, in fact, be defined as the means taken by the community to gain and regain confidence in its struggles against the vicissitudes of life. The idea of individual dealings with the tribal god had not yet arisen. A realization of this fact is the first step towards a true understanding of early religious beliefs and practices. A tribal god was usually regarded as a combination of ancestral beings with a personified nature-power.¹ This nature-power was generally represented as an animal or plant, as in modern totemic tribes.² Evidences of such an animal background to the Hebrew tribes' conception of the deity is found by some in the names Rachel (ewe) and Leah (antelope)³ (Gen. xxix. 16), in the tribal emblems that are mentioned in Jacob's blessing (Gen. xlix), and in the worship of the calves during the Exodus (Exod. xxxii. 1 ff.) and subsequently at Dan and Bethel (1 Kings xii. 28 ff.).

Since, in primitive times, the individual had no outlook beyond his tribe, the conception of his god and of his god's cult were confined within the same limits. The interests of the tribal god were thus absolutely the same as those of his worshippers. Even if he became temporarily estranged he would never forsake them. Wherever they go he goes with them, as the Pillar of Fire and the Cloud accompanied the wandering Israelites. This is the viewpoint of Jephtha's message to the tribe of Ammon: "Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh thy God giveth

¹ Cf. Pfeleiderer, *Religion and Historic Faiths*, p. 74.

² Cf. Emile Durkheim, *Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, p. 280.

³ Robertson Smith, *Kinship and Marriage in Early Arabia*, 2nd ed., pp. 254 f.

thee to possess? so whomsoever the Lord our God shall drive out from before us, them will we possess." (Judges xi. 24). Similarly, on the Moabite Stone, the king of Moab records: "I am Mesha, king of Moab. . . . I made this high place to Chemosh, because he has helped me. . . . Omri, king of Israel, oppressed Moab long, because Chemosh was angry against his land. . . . Chemosh said to me, 'Go and take Nebo from Israel.' . . ." The tribal god was jealous when his tribe went after other gods—for men did not deny the existence of the gods of other tribes, but they regarded the sway of each god as limited by the territory of the tribe who worshipped him. Thus David can regard his exile by king Saul as a religious excommunication, as though, in being driven out from Israel, he had been bidden, "Go serve other gods." (1 Sam. xxvi. 19). Such a henotheistic conception of the deity contains much that is valuable for the development of humanity. It emphasizes the welfare of the community, and provides a good school of discipline in thus encouraging self-sacrifice. Little opportunity, however, is given to individual initiative throughout the period when tribal religion is dominant.

2. Probably the very earliest form of worship—if such it can be called—was the sacrifice offered in order to induce the god, who was imagined to have afflicted the community, to go away. But the social instinct in mankind must soon have led them, in cases where the god appeared to be placated, to regard this divinity as beneficent, and so as one with whom fellowship might be enjoyed. This bond of fellowship was confirmed in most cases, as it is between man and man, by

inviting the god to a meal.¹ "Sacrifices to the deity from the lowest to the highest levels of culture, consist, to the extent of nine-tenths or more, of gifts of food and sacred banquets."² No doubt primitive man regarded the god as enjoying the food as much as he did himself. In the Babylonian flood epic, for instance, the gods are represented as gathering "like flies" round the sacrifice of Um-Napistim. The same conception is expressed somewhat less crudely in the Biblical account (*cf.* Gen. viii. 21): "Noah . . . offered burnt offerings . . . and Yahweh smelled a sweet savour, and Yahweh said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more." The idea of religious symbolism had not yet arisen. The worshipper invariably imagined that he was performing a direct service to his god. Among the Jews during the tribal period sacrifice is almost always regarded as a rite of communion. Wellhausen says of it: "The sacrifice is always connected with a meal. The custom was for men to place the blood and fat only upon the altar; men ate the meat. It was only in the principal festivals that Yahweh received the entire animal, or even the greater part of it."³ Where men sacrificed, there they feasted (*cf.* Exod. xxxii. 6; Judges ix. 27). There was no meal without a sacrifice and no sacrifice without a meal (1 Kings i. 9). . . . To rejoice, to eat and drink before Yahweh, is a customary formula until the time of Deuteronomy. The

¹ This idea of effecting communion with the deity by means of a common meal may account for Isaac's desire for venison before blessing his son Esau, since, as Gunkel remarks, Isaac says to his son, "Bring me venison, that I may eat, and may bless thee *before the Lord*" (Gen. xxvii. 7).

² Tylor, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 397.

³ This type of sacrifice would appear to be a survival of the earliest form (v. p. 23), *i.e.* a bribe left for the god to induce him to depart without harming the tribe.

meal eaten in the presence of Yahweh establishes a covenant between him and his hosts on the one hand, and between the hosts themselves on the other. . . . This idea is essential in the conception of sacrifice.”¹ Besides this notion of communion with the deity by means of a sacrificial banquet of which the worshippers and the god partake in common, there may exist the more crude idea that the god himself is represented by the victim sacrificed. Mr. J. A. MacCulloch² regards this view of sacrifice as one “which came in later and perhaps only sporadically.” But it is a universal primitive conception that any special quality of the food eaten is absorbed by the eater. Hence if the sacrifice, animal or cereal, were regarded as partaking of the qualities of the deity—whether from touching the altar, or for any other reason—the eaters would thus absorb their god’s divine essence. And there is weighty evidence that such “eating the god” is a religious rite which is primitive and widespread.³ The “Omophagia” in the Dionysos cult is an instance of this belief. Eating the god was a practice current among the Aztecs before the discovery of Mexico. These Aztecs made an idol of paste, which, after a general fast and various other ceremonies, was broken in pieces and distributed to the people. The people, we are told, “honoured these pieces in the same sort as their god . . . saying that they did eat the flesh of god.”⁴ Mr. Grant Allen proposes a

¹ *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israëls*, p. 74.

² *Dict. of Religion and Ethics*, vol. x. p. 897.

³ “Gewiss hat man ursprünglich auch bei den Griechen gemeint, dass man die Gottheit essen und sich dadurch ihre Kräfte aneignen könne,” admits Dr. Clemen. (*Der Einfluss der Mysterienreligionen auf das älteste Christentum*, p. 56).

⁴ Veytia, *Hist. Antig.*, bk. i. ch. xviii.; and cf. Acosta, v. 24. Veytia’s words are, “Lo recibian con gran reverencia, humiliacion, y lagrimas, diciendo que comian la carne de su Dios.”

different origin for this practice of "eating the god." He maintains that its starting-point was the cannibal custom of honorifically eating one's dead relations.¹ The dead, in this writer's view, were apotheosized by primitive man, so that such a custom became equivalent to eating the god. Whatever may be the underlying idea, it would appear to be true that, as Professor Lake states, "every race has passed through a period of the religious cannibalism which still survives in some parts of Central Africa."² S. Reinach affirms that the rapid spread of the Christian Church in Europe is mainly accounted for by its adoption of the idea of "eating the god" (Theophagie).³ To what extent primitive Christianity may be said to have possessed a "Theophagie" will appear when we discuss the history of the development of the eucharist in Chapter XVI.

Human sacrifice was another form of religious worship in early times. The purposes for which it was carried out were various. In some cases persons were killed in order that their spirits should perform certain functions impossible to mortal man encumbered with a body. For instance, a spirit might be required to protect the precincts of a house, or of a city; one might be necessary as a messenger to the dead. In the case of the sacrifice of chiefs, Sir J. G. Frazer has shown the reason to be that the vitality of the chief is believed to be intimately connected with the well-being of the tribe, and even of the world. Hence the chief must not on any account be allowed to

¹ *Evolution of the Idea of God*, p. 319.

² *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, p. 197.

³ "Dass das Urchristentum mit seiner Theophagie Europa so schnell erobern konnte, beruht zum grossen Teil darauf, dass die Idee von der Mandukation des Gottes keine neue war und dass sie unter einer verklärten Form einen der am tiefsten sitzenden Religionsinstinkte der Menschheit wiederaufleben liess." (*Orpheus*, 1910, 20).

grow feeble. He is therefore killed, and his soul transferred to a vigorous successor as soon as his vitality shows signs of waning.¹ But most human sacrifices seem to have been offered as a bribe, a propitiation, a thanksgiving, or to confirm an oath or covenant. Indications of human sacrifice are numerous in the Old Testament. Micah vi. 7, "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression?" witnesses to a time when sacrifice of the first-born was demanded by Yahweh. The rules for the redemption of the first-born (Exod. xxxiv. 20) evidence the same demand. Exodus xiii. 2, "Who-soever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast, it is mine"; and Exodus xxii. 29 c., "The first-born of thy sons shalt thou give unto me," explicitly state this requirement. That the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Canaan sacrificed their children in honour of the local deity is attested by R. A. Stewart Macalister, who found many skeletons of infants buried in large jars in the vicinity of the temple at Gezer and at Taanach.² The action of the king of Moab (2 Kings iii. 27) in offering his eldest son in a time of national peril, shows that the custom of human sacrifice was not unknown in Canaan in the ninth century B.C. A parallel is noted by Farnell³ in the Laconian legend of Helen whose father intended to sacrifice her to the gods in order to stay a plague. Some Biblical critics have supposed that the story of the sacrifice of Isaac retains memories of a sanctuary in Canaan where the custom of child sacrifice had been modified by the substitution of a ram for a human being. The "hewing of Agag in pieces before Yahweh" (I Sam. xv. 33),

¹ Cf. *G.B.*, pp. 264 f.

² Cf. *Reports on the Excavations at Gezer*, pp. 85-88.

³ *Evolution of Religion*, p. 27.

and the sacrifice of Jephtha's daughter (Judges xi. 30 f.), show how Yahweh was regarded as being pleased with human sacrifice during the tribal period. The latter example evidences that such an offering was looked upon as an appropriate thanksgiving. The view of sacrifice in general as being of the nature of a bribe appears in Jacob's vow (Gen. xxviii. 20-22): "If God will be with me . . . then . . . of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee."

In the more advanced stages of morality the "bribe" sacrifice becomes the "sin-offering"; and this type grew to be characteristic of the Hebrews. The views of sacrifice as a common meal, and as a slaughtering and eating of the deity, became inextricably mingled, and eventually developed into the sacramental conception which is dominant in the mystery religions and Christianity.

Turning now from the consideration of the early ideas of sacrifice to the question of the persons who offered it, and the places in which it could be performed, we find either an entire absence of priests (the sacrificial offering being made by the headman of the community), or an unelaborated development of the sacerdotal office. Among the Hebrew tribes who first established a footing in Canaan, sacrifice could be performed without a priest, as is shown by the stories of Gideon (Judges vi. 25 ff.) and of Manoah (Judges xiii. 19 ff.). It could be offered anywhere, especially where the god was regarded as having revealed himself, which was generally the case at wells, trees, monoliths, etc. "The altar," says Dr. Farnell, "belongs to the pillar cult of the pre-iconic period, and was believed to be the abode of an indwelling spirit."¹ This is the view

¹ *Hibbert Journal*, Jan. 1903, "Sacrifice in Early Greek Religion."

underlying Jacob's words in Genesis xxviii. 22 : " This stone . . . shall be God's house." ¹ The spot had proved to be sacred, and so became a place where sacrifice could be offered. A similar sanctity attached to such localities as Hebron and Beersheba ; and the ætiological aim of the patriarchal narratives is partly to explain why such places were regarded as specially holy.

Combined with sacrifice as one of the earliest expressions of religious worship is prayer. In the tribal period this was a social rather than an individual act. The community's general needs were expressed in common prayers for food or rain, prayers against pestilence, prayers for victory over enemies. As we have noticed in discussing the relation between religion and magic (p. 19), prayer in primitive times is frequently regarded as a spell. This is so even to-day, particularly in the case of Brahminism and Mohammedanism.

3. The significance of blood in primitive religions is of paramount importance. Upon the blood-bond is based the cohesion of the community, and their allegiance to and claim upon the tribal god. As a consequence of this, the practice of blood-revenge becomes prominent. It was a religious duty to revenge the blood of any member of the tribe whom a stranger had killed. When murder had been committed by a fellow-tribesman, the obligation of blood-revenge fell upon the dead man's nearest kinsfolk. The recognition of this custom appears in 2 Samuel xiv. 7, where a widow who had two sons, one of whom had

¹ The conception that spirits animate stones is world-wide. In the Old Testament it appears, for instance, in Laban's covenant with Jacob (Gen. xxxi. 48 f., where " This heap of witness " is paralleled with " God is witness ") and in Joshua's farewell to the people (Josh. xxiv. 27, " . . . and Joshua said, ' This stone shall be witness against us, for it hath heard the words ' . . . ').

killed the other, complains to David, "Behold the whole family has risen against thine handmaid, and they said, 'Deliver him that smote his brother, that we may kill him for the life of his brother whom he slew!'" This obligation to revenge blood was not associated in the mind of primitive man with the notion of sin on the part of the murderer, but rather with the danger that would result from uncovered blood. "Hark! thy brother's blood crieth out unto me from the ground," says Yahweh to Cain (Gen. iv. 10). Means must be taken to subdue this mysterious voice and to allay the dangers which uncovered blood put in motion. The unethical nature of the primitive conception is shown by the fact that such dangers existed, and that such means must be taken, whether the blood were shed intentionally or by accident.

The conviction that there is something mysterious and uncanny about blood is one which is embedded in the deepest strata of the human mind. Even to-day the sight of blood causes a sensation of nausea in many people. The very word is one which, like the name of God, contains an idea of sacredness or separateness, so that it is instinctively felt to be impious to use it lightly. Such an attitude towards blood is explicable by its identification in man's mind with life.¹ Blood was always regarded as the tangible counterpart of "life" or "soul," and was consequently credited with the same mysterious dangers and potentialities. This belief gives rise to many remarkable customs in primitive religion. Thus (a) one of the methods of producing inspiration was by drinking the fresh blood of a sacrificed victim.²

¹ Cf. Gen. ix. 4.

² G.B., p. 94 *et al.*

(b) Maori chiefs used to taste the blood of those whom they slew in battle, imagining that they thereby absorbed the dead man's soul. By this they ensured that the ghost would now protect instead of harming them. (c) It was probably from fear of being possessed by the animal's soul that the Jews never ate the blood. (d) Images were smeared with blood to animate them with divine life. Blood baptisms, such as the "taurobolium" in the rites of Attis, were likewise thought to bring about divine communion. (e) It is because the soul is thought to reside in the blood that savages are so careful to destroy all traces of their own blood. An enemy who possessed himself of such a relic would have a powerful charm with which to work evil magic.¹ (f) Renewed life was imparted to the soil by fertilising it with blood. These instances convey some impression of the immense significance of blood to the human mind, and a realization of this may help us to understand the mawkish references to blood in many of our otherwise beautiful Christian hymns.

4. Frazer regards taboo as a system of negative magic, *i.e.* a system of procedure by which harmful results will be avoided; positive magic being, in this writer's view, a procedure by which, in accordance with the supposed laws of similarity and contact, desired results may be attained.² According to this idea, taboo, like magic, originally had no reference to spiritual beings. But it would at a very early stage be explained, supplemented, and reinforced by association with a spirit or god, and so eventually come to acquire an ethical significance. This appears to be the case in the actual use of the word taboo.

¹ *G.B.*, p. 229 *et al.*

² *Ibid.*, pp. 19 ff.

The word is a Polynesian term, and "indicates that which a man must not use or touch because it belongs to a Deity."¹ It is thus equivalent to the Hebrew *קודש*, the Greek *ἅγιος*, and the Latin *sacer*. Like the word taboo, all these terms originally indicated that a thing was "separated" or "devoted" to a deity. Only as the notion of deity assumed a moral significance did such terms appropriate the meaning of "holiness" and "purity" and drop any implication of "pollution" or "uncleanness." Among primitive peoples the significance of all these words is the same. A thing which is taboo is regarded as charged with a mysterious and dangerous power. This may be likened to the charge of electricity in a Leyden jar,² or, where the "spirit" conception is more developed, to the "personal magnetism" which is supposed to reside within the hypnotist.

This power of radiating a harmful influence centres especially around the crises of life. It is as though the elemental vital force were the seat of all taboo. This life-force is felt to be in motion, and dangerously near, at the great turning-points of man's existence, such as birth, puberty, betrothal, marriage, and death. The mother of the new-born child is taboo, and must be "cleansed" before she can re-enter the social circle. Our "churching of women," now regarded as a thanksgiving, is probably the lineal descendant of this taboo. Girls at puberty are taboo, and are excluded from society, sometimes even "suspended between heaven and earth",³ in order that the force with which they are charged shall not escape and harm other members of the tribe, the crops, or the weather.

¹ Menzies, *History of Religion*, p. 71.

² Cf. *G.B.*, pp. 223, 594.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 601.

It was under the excuse of such a taboo that Rachel was not searched when Laban was hunting for his stolen gods in Jacob's caravan (Gen. xxxi. 35). The corpse is taboo, as are often its near kinsfolk. Our modern custom of not intruding upon mourners is traced back by Farnell to this primitive taboo instinct, the mourner's badge being originally an external mark to warn others against approaching him.¹ Finally, we may mention the taboos which surround the chief or king. As the deity's representative, the chief is regarded as being permanently charged with this dangerous power. Consequently not only his person, but any of his possessions, any place where his blood has dropped, any food which his lips may have touched, becomes taboo. Maoris have died of fright on learning that they had unwittingly eaten the remains of a chief's dinner or touched something that belonged to him.² A relic of the belief in the existence of such a power inherent in kings remained in England down to the eighteenth century. Scrofula was called the "king's evil," because it was popularly supposed that it could be cured by the king's touch. This belief in a beneficent power residing in the king's touch led the parents of Dr. Johnson to present him, when a child, to be "touched" by Queen Anne!

5. Belief in a tribal god did not exclude belief in minor spiritual beings or demons. In the life of early culture mankind was surrounded by a host of demonic influences. It is fear of such beings which largely underlies the system of taboo. The modern man of education pursues the even tenor of his way with no thought of danger or interruption. Any

¹ *Evolution of Religion*, p. 96.

² Cf. Frazer, *Psyche's Task*, p. 9.

expectation of the weird or inexplicable has been banished from his mind by the wand of science. This habit of security makes it difficult for us to visualize the perpetual dangers which actually did threaten, and still more those which were imagined as threatening, life in primitive times. To do so one needs to get away from civilization, as, for instance, up-country from Sierra Leone where every patch of cultivated ground is protected by a bone, piece of wood, cloth, or other such rubbish, each believed to be the home of a guardian spirit. In such an atmosphere it is easier to realize the terrors which surrounded mankind in his infancy.

From the time when Abraham served other gods beyond the river (Josh. xxiv. 2), down to the present, we have continual evidence of the persistence of this belief in demons. Jacob is represented as charging his household, "Put away the strange gods that are among you!" (Gen. xxxv. 2). The story of Micah and his images, which were regarded as worth carrying away to serve as gods by the Danite marauders (Judges xvii. 4, xviii. 18 f.), reveals such superstitions. Isaiah complains that the people of his day were wont to "seek unto them that have familiar spirits, and unto wizards, that chirp and that mutter." (Isa. viii. 19). Side by side with this we have the Greeks' belief in the "ker," and in the "erinyes," and the universal explanation of insanity and ecstatic states by the theory of demonic possession. It is only within the last few years that this theory has been replaced by the modern postulate of the subconscious mind. Tatian observed that "Christianity set men free from ten thousand tyrants." But this superstitious belief in demons and spirits did not

die with the victory of Christianity. Such a man as Dr. Harvey might prove by dissection that an old woman's pet toad, which was believed to be her "familiar," was nothing but "a meer arrant naturall toade,"¹ but the west-country belief in witches still remains among the older generation. As late as 1895 an Irishman at Ballyvadlea, Ireland, roasted his wife to death because of a superstition that she was not his wife but a fairy changeling. The hold which such irrational beliefs in supernatural agencies have upon the human mind is represented by Sir J. G. Frazer as a menace to civilization. "Superstition is the creed of the laggards in the march of intellect. . . . Those which survive longest are crudest. The peasants, who never heard of Isis or Osiris, of Apollo or Artemis, of Jupiter or Juno, retain to this day a firm belief in witches and fairies, in ghosts and hobgoblins, those lesser creatures of the mythical fancy in which their fathers believed long before the great deities of the ancient world were ever thought of. . . . This is because these answer more to the calibre of the lowest minds. The higher forms of superstition or religion (for the religion of one generation is apt to become the superstition of the next), being the creation of superior intelligences, have little hold on the minds of the vulgar."²

The outlook in the earlier stages of religion upon such subjects as we have considered—the deity, sacrifice, the significance of blood, taboo, and demons—is of fundamental importance. It still remains embedded in the human sub-consciousness, and is to be found to this day beneath the rites of the Christian Church. As Sir E. B. Tylor states: "The thoughts

¹ *Gentleman's Magazine*, 1832, p. 407.

² *Psyche's Task*, p. 167.

and principles in modern Christianity are attached to intellectual clues which run back through the pre-Christian ages to the very origins of human civilization, perhaps even of human existence.”¹

¹ *Primitive Culture*, vol. i. p. 421.

CHAPTER IV

THE DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS CONCEPTIONS AMONG NATIONAL COMMUNITIES

THE transition from tribal to national religion depended upon the development of social life. Man at first lived from hand to mouth. Only by degrees did he come to realize that there was a future for him. Present needs were originally his only care. But, even as a nomad, man must have gradually learned what, for instance, the seasons meant to him and to his fellows. His subsequent cessation from wandering and his adoption of agriculture mark a recognition of the advantage of relating the present to the future, for this is involved in sowing and reaping. The advance of a tribe from nomadic and pastoral to agricultural conditions rests upon a settled land tenure. This leads to some sort of *modus vivendi* with neighbouring tribes. Such could seldom be reached except through war. The blood-bond and the peculiar religious worship which differentiated the various tribes would render peaceful fusion difficult. But whatever means—whether, for instance, war, or possibly the establishment of a fictitious blood-bond¹—were adopted to weld tribes together into a nation, it must always have been obvious that, for a people to retain territory of agricultural value, numerical strength was imperative. Safety lay in numbers.

¹ So Maine, *Ancient Law*, pp. 136–138.

This consideration no doubt tended to make tribal wars merely a means of establishing political hegemony. Wars to the point of extermination would defeat their purpose by rendering the conquered territory too sparsely populated to be adequately defended and cultivated. Even the Jews, who always seem to have been prolific, were inclined to spare their defeated foes, and required to be continually urged to "blot them out." As soon as two tribes had arrived at a common outlook with regard to their combined boundary, their political fusion would only be strengthened by any aggression on the part of outside tribes. Judges, chapter v, gives a graphic, and probably a contemporary, picture of this process actually taking place.

As we have seen, religion permeated the whole of tribal life. Hence political fusion meant religious fusion too. Consequently, the religious traditions of each tribe were incorporated into the common stock where they underwent a process of assimilation and blending. Some of the various gods which each tribe brought into the new national unit would perhaps lose their identity altogether. Others would be syncretized. The process was facilitated by the following facts: (1) Tribal gods were often nameless and were known simply as "the god," or "the lord" (Baal). (2) Sacredness inevitably attaches to certain localities, though the inhabitants and the religion of the inhabitants may change. Hence, different gods might be worshipped at the same shrine at different seasons. This would tend to a syncretism of the doctrines and beliefs connected with these gods. (3) Many tribal festivals (*e.g.* agricultural festivals) would be celebrated simultaneously, thus

promoting the idea that the deities concerned were really identical.

The outcome of this process of syncretism is the establishment of a higher polytheism,¹ in which those gods whose identity remains are regarded as being in some ordered relationship to each other—for instance, a family or feudal relationship. The precise connection believed to hold among the gods always reflects the social order which prevails among the people who worship them. Thus, in Greece, where the kingship fell before the aristocracy, the tendency was to suppose a republic among the gods, the past kingship being remembered in the shadowy sovereignty of Zeus. But in the case of a monarchy—for instance, Persia—the supreme god is a king over the rest. “What is often described as a national tendency of Semitic religions towards monotheism, is in the main nothing more than a consequence of the alliance of religion with monarchy,” says Prof. Robertson Smith.² Among these Semites the people of Israel are noteworthy by reason of the tenacity with which they clung to their tribal deity, until he completely absorbed all others. The climax of this process finds expression in Ps. xcvi, a magnificent ode to Yahweh’s supremacy :

“As for all the gods of the peoples they are but things of
nought (אֱלִילִים),

But it is the Lord that made the heavens.” (Ps. xcvi. 5).

Culture becomes more highly developed in the settled national group than in the nomadic tribal

¹ The “lower” polytheism being a belief in the various spirits created by animism (*cf.* pp. 5, 6).

² *Religion of Semites*, p. 74.

group. Life is more secure. Man has more leisure. As a consequence, trades and arts begin to make their appearance. With this improvement in social conditions religion becomes less crude. Zoömorphism is replaced by anthropomorphism; completely so in Greece for instance, though in some places, such as Egypt, the process stopped half way with forms like the dog-headed Anubis and the Sphinx. Some myth is now evolved to explain the inseparable connection between the divinity and the animal with which it was originally identified. The latter is usually regarded as sacred to the deity in question. Thus the bull is sacred to Dionysos, and the goat to Athene, who is always represented as clad in an ægis. This change from animal gods to human gods constitutes an important step in the march of morality. The gods can now be credited with the moral traits of human rulers. With the Greeks, progress did not go far because the Homeric rhapsodists, who sung the stories of the gods, were wholly artists and not moral teachers. But in Persia, and in Israel under the influence of the Prophets, the result eventually was ethical monotheism.

As an instance of the alteration which took place in morals by the transformation to national life, we may note the different methods of dealing with a man-slayer. Blood-revenge, executed by the individual, was the custom permitted by tribal conditions. It was based upon the tribal bond of blood-relationship. This relationship no longer existed in the case of a nation formed by the fusion of various tribes. In this larger unit the patriarchal bond is replaced by the political. As a consequence, the punishment of the man-slayer is now carried out by the state, in obedience

to the laws of divine justice. Such a system is much higher ethically than the old practice of blood-revenge which took no cognizance of the man-slayer's motive but simply sought to silence and pacify the cry for vengeance which proceeded from uncovered blood.

In national life there appear many similar advances upon the rude conceptions of tribal life. The old primitive forms of worship are symbolized and refined. The cone, the tree trunk, or the stone, which was once regarded as the dwelling-place of a god, is now no more than a sign of his presence. Sacrifice is no longer a process by which the tribe can get into communion with their god by regaling him with food, or by reviving him with blood smeared upon his altar, or by eating him and so becoming *ἐνθεος*. It is transformed into a symbolic ritual act, which can only be performed by a privileged class, the priests. It is, moreover, conducted in accordance with a procedure revealed by the deity. In the case of "moral" religions, the rise of the priesthood usually results in the production of a written code. A code of this sort assures and accelerates the progress of moral ideas. Those national religions which have shown any vitality and permanence all possess such a code, to which have been added other sacred writings. It usually claims a divine origin through the medium of its founder. In this category may be placed the Law of Moses, the Code of Manu, the Zend-Avesta of Zarathustra, the Vedas of the Hindoos, the Buddha-Word of Gatama, and the Koran of Mahommed. The pure "nature" religions, on the other hand, though they give rise to a ritual and a priesthood, are not moral or legal in tone. They are the outcome of the Greek type of mind. Among the Greeks,

worship such as that of the Corn goddesses Demeter and Kore at Eleusis, and that of the vegetation and wine god Dionysos, are prominent and popular. These cults were largely served by women, and were, it is probable, at one time solely the concern of women, as was agriculture itself when it first began.

It is obvious that a people whose religion was mainly of the "nature-worship" type would have but small chance of resisting a tribe which had a "Mars" for its deity. The desert nomads, who later became "Israel," possessed such a one in Yahweh.¹ Yahweh was regarded as a god of war ("He teacheth my hands to war," 2 Sam. xxii. 35), a god of terror ("The 'fear' of Isaac," Gen. xxxi. 42, 53), a god of the desert and of the mountain (Exod. xix. 16 f.). When the Israelites, under the leadership of this God, began to penetrate Canaan and to learn agriculture, they inevitably tended to take part in the worship of the nature-gods and Baalim which had made the land so fertile. The Old Testament is full of evidences to this effect. However, national disasters from time to time prompted a return to Yahweh, their warrior-god. But the Yahweh to whom they returned after each backsliding became, without their consciously realizing it, increasingly syncretized with the "strange gods" of whom they had learnt. "The sacrifices and the cleansings and the new moons and the ark and the temple itself had their origin," as St. Chrysostom says, "from heathen grossnesses." (Hom. on Matt. vi. 3). Thus,

¹ Perhaps originally worshipped in the form of a sacred stone which reposed in a portable ark. (Cf. Gen. xlix. 24, "the 'stone' of Israel", and 1 Sam. iv. 4-7, where the "ark of God" is identical with "God". 1 Kings viii. 9, "There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone," reveals a redactor's repugnance to the primitive conception.)

eventually, the pure monotheism which the Jews brought back with them from the captivity was really a syncretism which had assimilated, among others, the vegetation and cereal deities of Canaan and the astral divinities of Chaldea.

In the case of the Jews, an intense national patriotism provided a strong incentive to pass directly from monolatry to monotheism. But usually a definite period of higher polytheism succeeds the worship of a tribal deity. From this there are two possible lines of development :

1. The various gods of the pantheon may be looked upon as different emanations of the one "world-soul." This is the philosophic point of view adopted by the Stoics. It leads to pantheism.

2. On the other hand, the supremacy of the one God may be emphasized, and the status of the other deities diminished. The latter at last become negligible and their original functions are now ascribed to the Supreme Being whom they are represented as serving. This was the course which polytheism followed among the Persians. It results in absolute monotheism. But absolute monotheism always tends to exalt God beyond man's comprehension. Hence intermediaries are necessary if the Supreme Deity is to be more to men than a mere name. It is partly in the means which Christianity adopts in order to effect such intermediation that this religion represents a blending and union of the ideas of God held by the Jews, those held by the Greeks, and those which prevailed in Mithraism and in the oriental Mystery Religions.

CHAPTER V

THE RISE OF ETHICAL MONOTHEISM AMONG THE HEBREWS AND THE GREEKS

TRIBAL religion, or monolatry, reflects, and in turn emphasizes, tribal exclusiveness. But at length, through some such process of development as we have outlined in the last chapter, tribal religion becomes national religion. National religion, after a polytheistic stage, evolves into a speculative or into a practical monotheism. We must now consider more particularly this next step in the process of religious development, viz. that from national religion to the personal worship of a moral Being. This, having an ethical basis, is logically independent of the limits of nationality.

History shows that development in all branches of human activity is mainly due to the influence of individual geniuses ; that it is only in proportion as the few great men are followed by the common herd that real advance is consolidated and ensured ; and that both originators and followers are largely stimulated by exceptional external circumstances. The individual geniuses who were primarily responsible for the attainment of a universal religious outlook for the people living round the shores of the Mediterranean were the Greek philosophers and the Hebrew prophets. The exceptional circumstances which influenced them, particularly the Hebrew prophets, were :

1. National disasters ;
2. The growth of a wider geographical and ethnographical outlook.

(i) *The influence of National Disasters.*

From the viewpoint of national religion, the defeat of the nation means, either the defeat of its god, or that the national deity is punishing his people through the agency of external enemies. The latter conception is exactly that of the prophet Isaiah, when, in x. 5, Yahweh is represented as saying, "Ho ! Assyrian, the rod of mine anger. . . ." If the former conclusion is drawn, and the national god is regarded as having been proved impotent, his worshippers naturally turn to one who has shown himself more powerful. "The god who answereth by fire, let him be god" (1 Kings xviii. 24), is their attitude ; and, having found out with whom the power lies, they thenceforth, as Naaman, "offer neither burnt-offering nor sacrifice unto other gods" (2 Kings v. 17). On the other hand, if the national disaster is looked upon as a punishment for breaking covenant with the deity, means must be taken for placating his anger and renewing communion with him. This is the main theme of the Hebrew prophets. National decadence and defeat suggested to their clearer vision and enlightened minds that there was something radically wrong with the nation's relationship with Yahweh. And so it was that the conception of the sacrifice of the clean heart, and the ideal of God's law written upon the heart, were gained for the world. Such religio-ethical ideas make the worship of God ethical rather than ritual. In so doing, they advance from the national to the universal religious outlook. The

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in promoting universalism, as opposed to particularism, was immense. We must note, however, that, although the people returned from the exile with an idea of God which was considerably enriched and with the knowledge that they "did not need any more to be an independent people in order to be sure of Yahweh's favour and to enjoy his blessing,"¹ yet all the prophets even — Deutero-Isaiah — still retain much of the national viewpoint. Their interests are centred upon nations and peoples, not upon individuals. The possibility of individual dealings with God is, however, implicit and latent in many of their sayings. For instance, Micah vi. 8 : "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good ; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God ?" Simple requirements of this kind clearly dispensed with an elaborate code such as Ezekiel's. Similarly, Jeremiah (xxxi. 31-34) looks forward to the day when every man shall have the law of God written within his own heart. Malachi, the last of the prophets, recognizes that even among the heathen there are true worshippers of God. (Mal. i. 11).

The hap of the universal outlook during the post-prophetic period may be briefly stated. In the apocryphal writings the nations are mostly regarded as objects of Yahweh's judgment rather than of his mercy. Such passages as Tobit xiii. 11, "Many nations shall come from far to the name of the Lord God," and Tobit xiv. 6, "All the nations shall turn to fear the Lord God truly and shall bury their idols," are exceptional. Some of the Psalms show the broader vision ; and so does the pseudonymous writing,

¹ Karl F. R. Budde, *Religion of Israel to the Exile*, p. 195.

the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, mainly a work of the second century B.C.; "the salvation of the Gentiles belongs to the very texture of the book," says Dr. Charles.¹ A century later (first century B.C.) the harsher view of the destiny of the Gentiles had become prevalent, and it is almost universal in the literature of later Judaism.

(b) In the case of the Greeks, the influence of a wider geographical knowledge was felt as the result of Alexander's conquests, 356-323 B.C.: these had broken down the barriers which had separated the eastern nations from one another and from Hellenism. Freedom of religious thought, once a crime for which Socrates had been put to death, now became general in Greece. The local gods of the city states were palpably too small for the new world which was dawning on men's outlook. But more adequate substitutes were already to hand. Along with the influx of eastern customs into Greece there came a knowledge of eastern cults. The spread of these cults was increased by the influence of oriental slaves who had been brought back by the victorious armies. These foreigners, estranged from their national gods as they were from their native lands, recognized the necessity of establishing new religious communities. Hence there arose in Greece certain voluntary religious associations, open to all, independent of birth and nationality, and constituted by joint participation in the sacred meal. For, as we have seen (pp. 24, 25), in primitive religious conceptions, the unifying efficacy of the sacrificial repast was regarded as forming the basis of common worship.² The effect of these societies upon the Mystery

¹ *Test. of Twelve*, note on T-Ben, ix. 2.

² Cf. Jevons, *Introd. to Hist. of Religion*, p. 331 *et al.*

Religions of the first century, and, through them, upon Christianity, is important.

Side by side with the influence of the Hebrew prophets in promoting the broad ethical ideas which lead to universal religion we must place the teaching of the Greek philosophers. At the same time that Nehemiah was establishing legalism in Palestine, Socrates was teaching a belief in the providence of an All High Reason. This Being, Socrates taught, used the popular gods as his instruments, and his spirit dwelt in man as a "dæmonian," a kind of personification of the modern "conscience." The mantle of Socrates fell upon Plato. Plato maintained the eternal value of the Good, the True, and the Beautiful. The desire for these, on the part of the human soul, is a proof of its divine origin, and is the means by which it attains salvation. Similarly, the teaching of the Pythagoreans, of Pindar, and of the Orphic school, often breathe the highest ethical spirit. Their god is one "who accomplisheth every end whereon he thinketh, who overtakes the eagle on the wing, who passes the dolphin in the sea, who bendeth the high-minded in his pride, and to others he giveth deathless glory."¹

The general teaching of Greek Philosophy—especially of the Epicurean and Stoic schools—in the last two or three centuries B.C., tended to fortify the individual soul against the changes and chances of this present life, and to belittle the fears which beset the next one. This they did by creating a well-balanced and calm spirit of endurance. Their aim was the attainment of happiness, which they identified with that of virtue. This inculcation of steadfastness and morality, together

¹ *Pyth.*, ii. 50.

with their doctrine of the equality of man, helped to preserve the fabric of society at a time when the supports which the national religion had hitherto provided were showing ominous signs of decay. The lofty tone of these Greek philosophers, and the likeness of some of their teachings to those of the Hebrew prophets, led some Christian apologists to ascribe the Greek views to a process of direct borrowing. Might not Plato, for instance, have learned the doctrines of Jeremiah in Egypt? But actually there is a fundamental difference between the Greek philosophers and the Hebrew prophets. Though the former developed ideas of perhaps equal ethical value, their influence was not extensively felt outside the sphere of the philosophical schools. The Hebrew prophets, on the other hand, were, first and foremost, practical teachers of religion to the people. "Hebrew monotheism was psychological more than metaphysical, *i.e.* it was not arrived at by philosophy, but gained by a large number of people as the guiding *motif* of life."¹

Hebrew monotheism became Christian universalism largely through the influence of Paul and the Lucan writings (*cf.* Gal. iii. 28; Col. iii. 11; Acts x. 35; xvii. 24-28). We shall see subsequently how the last remaining bonds of Jewish particularism were burst, and how Christianity passed under the sway of Greek philosophy and of the Mystery cults.

¹ King, *Development of Religion*.

II.—ANTECEDENTS OF THE JEWISH
CONTRIBUTION TO CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER VI

THE MESSIANIC HOPE

WHAT we term the "Messianic Hope" was originally something very much wider than the expectation of the coming of a personal Messiah. It was, at first, the anticipation of the advent of a golden age. This myth of a golden age is to be found among many primitive peoples. That such an era should be ushered in by the manifestation of a particular Messiah was probably not an integral and necessary part of the Messianic Hope among the Jews until long after the exile. We will therefore consider separately:

1. The development of the Jews' hope of an ideal Era (*Heilzeit*).

2. The development of their hope in the advent of a personal Messiah.

3. Messianic Hopes in extra-Palestinian and Pagan circles, in so far as they have influenced Christianity.

1. The prophets of the eighth century looked forward to a golden era when the nation, generally after a period of discipline and hardship, would enter upon a time of ideal prosperity and happiness. The following are typical prophecies of this future: "In that day shall the growth (קצף) of Yahweh be for beauty and for glory, and the fruit of the land for a pride and a renown for the escaped of Israel" (Isa. iv. 2 f.). "For, O people in Zion that dwellest in Jerusalem, weep thou shalt not . . . and though Yahweh

give you the bread of adversity and the water of affliction yet shall not thy teacher hide Himself, but thine eyes shall see thy teacher, and thy ears shall hear a word behind thee saying, This is the way, walk ye in it . . ." (Isa. xxx. 19-21) "and he shall give the rain of thy seed, that thou shalt sow the land withal ; and the bread of the increase of thy ground, and it shall be fat and plenteous ; in that day shall thy cattle feed in large pastures . . . in the day that Yahweh bindeth up the hurt of his people, and healeth the stroke of thy wounds." (Isa. xxx. 23 f.). The characteristic of these prophecies is their emphasis on material and moral prosperity, under the direct sovereignty of Yahweh. Elsewhere, Isaiah speaks of the rule of an ideal king (xxxii. 1 f.). It is a return of the "sure mercies of David" for which Hosea looks : ". . . Afterwards shall the Children of Israel return, and seek Yahweh their God, and David their king ; and shall come with fear unto Yahweh and to his goodness in the latter days." (iii. 5). Amos expresses a similar hope : "In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen . . . and I will plant them upon their land . . . saith Yahweh thy God " (ix. 11 f.). Obadiah prophesies of "saviours" coming up upon Mount Zion (21) ; and Jeremiah represents the nation as being ruled by a succession of Davidic princes (xvii. 25) : "There shall enter in by the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David ; . . . and this city shall remain for ever." These prophecies show that in pre-exilic times the Messianic Kingdom was conceived of, either as a monarchy—in which case the king was Yahweh's representative—or as a theocracy under Yahweh's direct rulership. The kingdom would be established

on Palestinian soil ; and those who were living to enjoy it would experience the fullest physical and spiritual satisfaction and blessedness.

As a result of the exile there arose a somewhat less materialistic and more ethical forecast of the chosen people's future. We have already seen, in considering the growth of universal religion, that national disaster had led Ezekiel and Jeremiah to a realization of the worth of the individual soul.¹ Consequently, the conception of the age to come is henceforth distinguished by the inclusion of the idea that Yahweh's law will then be written upon each man's heart. "Behold, the days come, saith Yahweh, that I will make a new covenant with the House of Israel, and with the House of Judah. . . . I will put my law in their inward parts, and in their heart will I write it . . ." (Jer. xxxi. 31 f.). "A new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you . . ." (Ezek. xxxvi. 26 f.). Isa. lvii. 15 f.² represents this preparation of the heart as a condition of God's presence, and consequently of a new era. And a prophecy of the same writer (Trito-Isaiah), looks forward to a time when "the former troubles shall be forgotten" and Yahweh will "create a new heaven and a new earth," in which all things will minister to the welfare of his redeemed and regenerate people (Isa. lxv. 17-25). As a natural corollary of the individualistic outlook there arises the belief that Yahweh's faithful servants will not be left in Sheol, but will be raised from the dead to take part in the blessedness of the age to come. Thus Ezekiel proclaims : ". . . Behold I will open your graves,

¹ *E.g.* Ezek. xviii. 4, "All souls are mine . . ." ; and Jer. xxxi. 30, "Every soul shall die for its own iniquity."

² Written, according to Duhm's theory, during the restoration of Ezra and Nehemiah.

and cause you to come out of your graves, O my people, . . . and I will put my spirit in you, and ye shall live, and I will place you in your own land." (Ezek. xxxvii. 12, 14). Ezekiel's language here may well be merely figurative of the national regeneration; but the use of this figure in connection with the new era indicates at least the subconscious growth of the idea of individual resurrection to the Messianic Kingdom. In Isa. xxvi. 19,¹ this hope of the resurrection of righteous Israelites is definitely expressed: "Thy dead shall live; my dead bodies shall arise. . . ."

Between the establishment of the Law and the time of the Maccabees we find "vague anticipations of a glorious and happy future in which the presence of God would be manifest, but of which a Messiah would form no essential feature."² Hope tended to become faint when, after the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah, no Messianic epoch dawned. Psalm lxxvii. 9, voices the general despondency: "Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?"³ This hopelessness is, however, met by the extraordinary confidence and optimism of the apocalyptic writers. In spite of renewed disappointments they never fail to reconcile present misfortunes with the prophetic promises, and to rouse the expectation that the Messianic kingdom is at last about to be established. For instance, in Daniel ix, the seventy years, after which the Jews were to be restored by Yahweh, according to Jeremiah (xxix. 10 f.), are interpreted as seventy weeks of years. At the end of this

¹ Written, according to Cheyne, Skinner, and others, late in the Persian period, c. 350-330 B.C.

² Drummond, *Jewish Messiah*, p. 199.

³ Kirkpatrick places this psalm, which shows close affinities with Habakkuk's prayer, in the period of the Exile.

period, *i.e.* within the writer's lifetime (*c.* 165 B.C.), the Greek power was to be destroyed and God's kingdom set up. Later, in a similar spirit, the writers of Baruch and 4 Esdras are led to identify the fourth kingdom of Daniel's prophecy (Dan. viii. 21 *et al.*) with Rome, since the Greek sovereignty had declined and Israel's fortunes had not been restored. A typical Messianic outlook of this period (second century B.C.) is represented by 1 Enoch xc. 20-42, written *c.* 100 B.C. The hour of judgment for the wicked is imminent (20 f.). God is about to establish the new Jerusalem (28, 29), whither the diaspora will be gathered, and to which the righteous dead will be resurrected (33). The Messiah, "a white bullock" who becomes "a lamb, and that lamb became a great animal" (38), *i.e.* a man, will appear among the community of the faithful. The Gentiles who are alive will be converted to Yahweh, and will join the eternal Messianic Kingdom which will be established on the earth.

In the century and a half preceding the public ministry of Jesus certain new features appear in the Jewish picture of the future. As a result of the failure of the hopes which the Maccabees had aroused, religious thinkers in Palestine seem to have given up the prospect that the present earth would ever become a fit scene for the realization of their ideal kingdom of God.¹ Hence the Messiah's kingdom is now regarded as a kind of earnest upon earth of the kingdom of God which will afterwards be enjoyed in heaven. In most of the writings of this time the judgment and the resurrection are placed at

¹ This view may be due partly to the influence of the Persian belief that the present world would be destroyed by fire, and a new and perfect one be created where the righteous dead would enjoy eternal bliss.

the end of the temporary Messianic reign, and the dead are resurrected as spirits, or, at least, become spirits immediately after their resurrected bodies have served the purpose of confirming their identities. By the time of Christ the hope of even a temporary establishment of the Messianic kingdom upon earth had largely subsided. The Rabbis discouraged any direct attempt to expedite its advent by insurrection against the foreign yoke. They believed that the surest method of hastening it was by exact performance of the Law. After the fall of Jerusalem political aspirations were again given a new impetus, and intensely patriotic writings, such as the Syriac Apocalypse of Baruch and 4 Esdras, made their appearance. These foretold the speedy destruction of Rome by miraculous means. In 4 Esdras ¹ the Messiah is represented as reigning for 400 years, after which he and everything alive die (2 Esdras of Apocrypha, vii. 27-30). Seven days later there follows, in accordance with the Pharisaic doctrine, the general resurrection and the last judgment.

This idea of a temporary Messianic kingdom appears in St. Paul's eschatological picture in 1 Corinthians xv. and also in the Christian Apocalypse (xx. 4, 5), where the martyrs are resurrected—like the saints in Daniel—to “live and reign with Christ 1000 years.”

2. We must now consider the course of development of the Jewish hope in a personal Messiah. This had a much more important influence upon Christianity than did their expectation of a golden age.

Gressmann maintains that hope in a personal Messiah, a semi-divine *Heilbringer*, was a common possession of the ancient world. He traces the

¹ A composite work, published in its present form c. 120 A.D. according to Box (*cf.* Charles' *Apoc. and Pseud.*, vol. ii. p. 542).

Jewish doctrine back beyond the pre-exilic prophets to this general belief.¹ Whatever truth there may be in this theory, the fact remains that, from the evidence which has come down to us, a personal Messiah was not an integral and indispensable component in the picture of the future kingdom until after the Exile.

The term מָשִׁיחַ or מְשִׁיחַ was the ordinary title of the Jewish king. So long as the monarchy lasted every ruler was Yahweh's "anointed." "It was only after the Jews lost their independence that the future restoration could be spoken of, in contrast to the present, as the days of the Messiah."² That the future ruler should be thought of as the descendant of David was only natural. David had been the great hero-king of the united tribes, and his line had proved so much more stable than that of Jeroboam. Even before the Exile, during the Syro-Ephraimite invasion of 735 B.C., Isaiah prophesies such a turn in the tide of Judah's fortunes: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonder-Counsellor, Hero-God, Father of Eternity, Prince of Peace. For the increase of authority and for peace without end on the throne and kingdom of David, to confirm it and to establish it with judgment and righteousness, from henceforth even for ever" (Isa. x. 6, 7). It may be true, as Robertson Smith says, that "Isaiah's ideal is only the perfect performance of the ordinary duties of monarchy; for this end he sees a king to be required who reigns in Yahweh's name and in the strength of his spirit, but there is no proof that

¹ Cf. *Der Ursprung der israelitisch-jüdischen Eschatologie*, pp. 272 ff.

² Robertson Smith, *Prophets of Israel*, p. 302.

he thought of more than this ” ; ¹ yet this prophecy, and others of Isaiah, such as xi. 1-9 (“ There shall come forth a shoot out of the stem of Jesse . . .”), and xxxii. 1-8 (“ Behold a king shall reign in righteousness . . .”), became the source and inspiration of a stream of Messianic passages, which fasten now upon this man, now upon that, as the hoped-for Messiah. Hezekiah, who had appeared in some degree to approximate to Isaiah’s ideal, was succeeded by his son Manasseh and his grandson Amon, both of whom “ did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord ” (2 Kings xxi. 2, 20). But with Josiah’s reforms the Messianic hope revived. Thus Jeremiah speaks of the advent of the “ righteous branch,” a scion of David’s line (Jer. xxiii. 5, 6).

In spite of the depressing conditions of the Exile, Ezekiel anticipates the time when Yahweh will set up one shepherd over his people, “ even David ” (Ezek. xxxiv. 23). But it is noticeable that in the prophecies of Deutero-Isaiah Cyrus is God’s “ anointed ” (Isa. xlv. 1) ; and the figure of the Suffering Servant appears as in some mysterious manner effecting the salvation of the nation (Isa. liii. 4-6 *et al.*). The theory has been put forward that this conception of the suffering servant is due to foreign influence ; but, as Dr. Clemen says, “ Nothing is proved by the argument that a hymn, which could have been sung each year by the initiated worshippers on the day when a nature-god, like Adonis or Attis, had died, could have announced his resurrection in the same terms as Isaiah liii.” ² The marvellous degree in which this prophet has foreshadowed the essential truths concerning the life and

¹ *Prophets of Israel*, p. 306.

² *Primitive Christianity and its Non-Jewish Sources*, p. 144.

mission of Jesus Christ must not lead us to overlook the fact that Jewish exegetes never seemed to have accorded any Messianic significance to the suffering servant.

On the return from the Exile, Messianic hopes centred for a time on Zerubbabel, to whom Zechariah applies Jeremiah's designation "the branch" (נֶחֱמָץ) (Zech. iii. 8; vi. 12). In Trito-Isaiah (Isa. lvi-lxvi), probably written about the time of Nehemiah's restoration, the idea of the establishment of a new era under a Davidic king, which Ezekiel (xxxiv. 23) and Zechariah (iii. 8) had attempted to revive, sinks into the background (*cf.* Isa. lxv. 17-25; lxvi. 22-23). The hope of a personal Messiah reappears, however, in the psalms of the Greek period. Much of the language which such psalms (*e.g.* Ps. ii and cx) apply to Yahweh's "anointed" may be mere *Hofstil*, the usual flattery to which monarchs are subjected. None the less, the rise of the Maccabees ¹ did undoubtedly give renewed life to the hopes of those who were waiting for the consolation of Israel. But now the Messiah is regarded as a priest as well as a king (*cf.* Ps. cx. 4, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek"). This is because the Maccabees were descended from Levi. In 1 Enoch lxxxix-xc, Judas Maccabæus is regarded as the promised Messiah. In Psalm cx Simon the Maccabee is similarly described, and a picture of the blessedness of his reign is painted in Messianic colours in 1 Maccabees xiv. 8-15. Similarly in Test. Levi xviii. 2 ff., John, Simon's son, is spoken of in Messianic terms. But these all passed away, and their successors, after John Hyrcanus, were so reprobate and godless that all hope in a human Messiah seems to have been abandoned.

¹ The name is said to be derived from the initial letters in Exodus xv.

מִי־נִמְנָה נֹאֵלֵם יְהוָה

Consequently, in the Parables of Enoch xxxvii-lxxi, which Foakes-Jackson and Lake date soon after 50 B.C.,¹ the expected deliverer is no longer a man springing from the community, but is the supernatural "Son of Man," who pre-existed from the beginning (xlvi. 2),² who possesses universal sovereignty (lxii. 6), and who will be the great judge of all mankind (lxix. 27).³ The author appears to have regarded Daniel's "Son of Man" (*i.e.* the Jewish nation) as an individual, "The Lord's Anointed One" (*cf.* Ps. ii. 2). This idea of a pre-existent deliverer must not be confused with that of a Davidic Messiah. It is doubtful if the two were identified before the Christian period (*cf.* p. 81). The influence upon Christianity of this conception of "the Son of Man" is patent. The New Testament titles of Jesus, which describe him as the "Christ" (Luke ix. 20; xxiii. 35 *et al.*), "the Righteous One" (Acts iii. 14; vii. 52; xxii. 14), "the Elect One" (Luke ix. 35; xxiii. 35), and especially as "the Son of Man," all originate as personal ascriptions in this Book of Enoch (*cf.* xlvi. 10; xxxviii. 29; xl. 5; liii. 6; xlv. 2 ff.; xlviii. 2). The designation "Son of Man" (Aramaic "Bar Nasha," *i.e.* simply "Man") has been connected by Reitzenstein, through Persian channels, with Parsiism. Parsiism has the figure of an "Urmensch," or primal man, who appears as a godlike being, and who would be the first to rise from the dead.⁴

¹ *Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 354.

² "And at that time the Son of Man was named
In the presence of the Lord of Spirits,
And his name before the Head of Days,
Yea, before the Sun and Signs were created."—Enoch xlvi. 2, 3.

³ "And he (= 'Son of Man') sat on the throne of glory,
And the sum of judgment was given unto the Son of Man."

Enoch lxix. 27.

⁴ *Cf.* Gressmann, *op. cit.*, pp. 286 ff.

Along with this conception of a supernatural Messiah there survives the hope of a Messianic Warrior-King of the Davidic line, who would fulfil all the ambitions of Jewish patriotism. The Psalms of Solomon, *c.* 70-40 B.C.,¹ which are the first writings to employ the expression "Son of David" as a personal title of the Messiah, speak of this Warrior-King thus: "Behold, O Lord, and raise up unto them their King, the Son of David . . . that he may purge Jerusalem from nations that trample her down to destruction." (xvii. 23*a*, 25). The Assumption of Moses, a work of the first century A.D., though protesting against the fusion of political ideas and Messianic beliefs, reflects a similar hope. In the New Testament it is echoed in the disciples' question to Jesus, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i. 6).

These apocalyptic writings show how intense, how varied, and how popular was the Jews' desire for a golden age and for the advent of a Saviour and a Deliverer, at the dawn of our era. Christianity inherited these hopes. The "little apocalypse" in the Gospels (Mark xiii. 7 ff. and parallels), with its triple division, "the beginning of travail" (xiii. 7, 8), tribulation (xiii. 14-20), and "parousia" (xiii. 24-27), is practically, both in content and form, one of the current Jewish pictures of the future. These all represented the end of the age as one of unprecedented suffering, leading on to a final desperate effort by the powers of evil, and culminating in the complete victory of righteousness and the ushering in of the "age to come." The essential feature of this age to come was that it would be a time when God's

¹ Mostly after the death of Pompey, 48 B.C.

sovereignty would be perfectly realized. On this point the eschatological teaching of Persians, Jews, and Christians all agree.

3. It has already appeared that Messianic hopes were not confined to the Jews of Palestine. Similar expectations existed in extra-Palestinian and Pagan circles. Certain of these have influenced Christian thought, and consequently they claim notice among the antecedents of Christianity.

In the outlook of the Jewish diaspora in Egypt, though the popular hope of a Messianic Ruler did not wane, the Messiah tended to be replaced among philosophers by the Law and by personified Wisdom. Thus the Messianic hope of Alexandrian Judaism approximated to a philosophy of betterment in religion and morals.

Among the Greeks, from the time of Alexander onwards, the title of $\Sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho$, previously a cult name reserved for the gods, was applied to men. It was also combined with the oriental idea of divine incarnation. But there is considerable doubt whether this evidences any hope in a World-Saviour who would usher in a new era, or whether it is merely the extravagant language of the courtier which represents each sovereign as surpassing his predecessor.

The Romans inherited this custom of referring to their rulers as semi-divine beings. Cicero's rhetorical exaggerations under this head have been traced to oriental influence. Certain inscriptions discovered at Priene, dating probably from the year 9 B.C., ascribe to Augustus divine attributes, calling him $\Sigma\omega\tau\eta\rho$ of the human race, the one who has been filled with gifts for the good of

mankind.¹ Virgil's famous eclogue shows remarkable agreements with contemporary Jewish Messianic expectations.² It has been suggested that Judaic influences had reached Virgil through the channel of the Sibylline Oracles or of the Septuagint.³ On the other hand, Dr. C. G. Jung, in his studies of the transformations and symbolisms of the libido, speaks of the "remarkable expectation of redemption which had taken possession of mankind even before the spread of Christianity," and he considers that Virgil's eclogue "might well be a result of this mood."⁴

In this conspectus of the Messianic Hope the figure of Mithra must not be omitted. "En Perse, dans la religion préavestique, Mithra occupe la position de médiateur entre le monde supérieur et lumineux, où trône Ahoura (Ormazd), et le monde inférieur, où s'exerce l'activité funeste d'Angro mainyou (Ahriman). Au temps des Archéménides . . . la religion perse, transformée en Mésopotamie, s'empregné d'astrologie, sous l'influence de la sagesse chaldéenne. Elle se maintient sous cette forme nouvelle dans certains

¹ Cf. "Als die Zeit erfüllt war." and "Der Heiland." by Harnack, in *Christliche Welt*, 1899, 1900.

² Magnus ab integro Sæculorum nascitur ordo,
Jam redit et Virgo, redeunt Saturnia regna ;
Jam nova progenies cælo demittitur alto.
Tu modo nascenti puero, quo ferrea primum
Desinet ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,
Casta fave Lucina : tuus jam regnat Apollo.

Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,
Inrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.
Ille deum vitam accipiet divisque videbit
Permixtos heroas et ipse videbitur illis,
Pacatumque reget patriis Virtutibus orbem.

³ Cf. *Virgil's Messianic Eclogue*, J. B. Mayor, pp. 87-137.

⁴ *Psychology of the Unconscious*, p. 49.

royaumes d'Asie Mineure, après la chute de l'empire perse, et elle subit alors l'influence hellénique."¹ Thus the Messianic beliefs which centred round Mithra may have influenced Christianity both through Judaism, which absorbed many religious ideas from Persia, and also through Hellenistic channels. Mithra was held to be the mediator between God and mankind, the creator of the world, the divine type of struggling humanity, and their guide to heaven after death. Like the Iranian "saoschyant," Mithra would return at the end of the world, summon the dead from their graves and hold a last judgment. This completed, the sacrifice of the primordial bull, from which the world had first originated, would be repeated once more, and from its fat, mingled with wine, Mithra would prepare the divine drink which conferred immortality. This he would then offer to his faithful followers, who would thenceforth live with him for ever upon a new earth.

Affinities with the Judaic and Christian conceptions of the Messiah are not difficult to trace. "It was," says Jung, "a sense of the profoundest need, which—since humanity could not survive in a state of dissoluteness—had driven the mass of the people, vegetating in spiritual darkness, towards a Messiah, in whose name new ways of love would be created and the moral restraint of the animal impulses be effected. Both Christianity and Mithraism show that feeling of redemption which animated the first disciples, and which we scarcely know how to appreciate to-day, for these old truths are empty for us. Most certainly we should understand it had our customs even a touch of the ancient brutality which infected the whirlwinds

¹ Loisy, *Les Mystères Païens*, p. 162.

of unchained libido which roared through the ancient Rome of the Cæsars.”¹ Whether we are so free from the “ancient brutality” as this writer assumes may be open to question.

¹ *Psychology of the Unconscious*, pp. 41 f.

CHAPTER VII

DEVELOPMENT OF JEWISH THOUGHT AFTER THE CLOSE OF OLD TESTAMENT CANON

THE establishment of the Law under Ezra and Nehemiah not only helped to isolate the Jews from other peoples, but also tended to confine their religion within a stiff mould of formalism, such as rendered any further development impossible. Yahweh was regarded as having spoken in the Law his last and final word. There was no longer place for any new teaching, like that which the inspired prophets had given in the pre-exilic days. Zechariah actually classes future prophecy with idolatry and unclean spirits, and foretells (*i.e.* teaches) that prophets should be "thrust through" (*cf.* xiii. 2 ff.).

It is plain from such writings as the 119th Psalm that the Law was capable of arousing deep religious enthusiasm. But mere reinterpretation of, and expatiation upon, a stereotyped code, however lofty, could hardly provide sufficient outlet for the religious life of such a gifted people as the Jews. Moreover, the stirring times between Malachi and Matthew were such as to rouse those who possessed any spark of the prophetic spirit. The apparent failure of the coming of that golden age, which the ancient prophets had foretold as imminent, called for a message from those who retained any confidence in Yahweh's faithfulness. Yet such a message could not hope to

find a hearing if it appeared to originate subsequently to the inspired Law, Yahweh's adequate, infallible, and final word to the nation. Consequently, we find that a number of writings were published at this time under the pseudonyms of Enoch, Solomon, Baruch, Ezra, Isaiah, Daniel, the Patriarchs, etc., men whose names were sufficiently weighty to ensure a reading in spite of the veto of the Law.¹ Judaism was in this manner freed, to some extent, from the petrifying influence of legalism; and the teaching of the pre-exilic prophets in ethics, eschatology, and religion was carried on and developed by their successors, the pseudepigraphical writers. Thus, when in due time the barriers which isolated Judaism had been broken down by the Greek and Roman dominion, the teaching which the chosen people had to offer to the rest of the world was something very different from a rigid and formal code of ethics and religion. A study of this non-canonical literature, which was written between 300 B.C. and A.D. 100, is essential for a right estimation of the religious outlook of that side of Judaism from which Christianity took its rise.

In considering the influence of the Apocrypha proper, it must be remembered that these books were incorporated into the LXX translation. They therefore formed part of the Bible of the Greek-speaking Jews at the time of the Apostles. Accordingly most of the New Testament writers were almost as familiar with these books as with the Hebrew canonical

¹ 4 Ezra (2 Esdras iv-xiv of Apocrypha) explains the existence of these Apocalypses by the statement (xiv. 17-40) that the Bible ("the law of life") was taken away for a while because of Israel's unrighteousness, and that in Ezra's time ninety-four books were revealed once more. The first twenty-four of these were ordered to be "published openly," but the seventy last were only to be delivered to "such as be wise".

scriptures. An instance of their underlying influence upon Christian doctrine is to be found in St. Paul's words in Romans v. 12, "As through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin . . .," and 1 Corinthians xv. 21, 22, "By man came death . . . as in Adam all die. . .". This doctrine of the effect of Adam's transgression, which St. Paul regards as the basis of his argument, is not found in the Hebrew Old Testament, but first occurs in Sirach xxv. 24 : "From a woman was the beginning of sin, and because of her we all must die." Further, the Christian identification of the devil with the serpent who, in Genesis iii, is only described as "more subtle than any beast of the field which the Lord had made," is first expressly stated in another book of the Apocrypha, namely Wisdom (ii. 24) : "By the envy of the devil death entered into the world." An echo of the pseudepigraphical writings in the New Testament is to be heard in the keynote of the Christian message : "Repent ! for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." In general it is true to say that the pseudepigraphical literature furnishes the atmosphere of the New Testament. It is noteworthy that this literature was probably, for the most part, written in Galilee, "the home of the religious seer and mystic," the place whence the founder of Christianity and all his faithful apostles came.

We will now consider under certain heads the great spiritual progress which took place in Judaism during the last two centuries B.C. The Apocrypha in part, but mainly the Pseudepigrapha, furnish our sources of evidence. The growth of the Messianic Hope has already been traced. We will here notice the development which appears in the Jews' views upon the Law,

upon Sheol, upon the Resurrection, upon Angel- and Demon-ology, and upon Vicarious Suffering.

The Law.—It has been remarked above that the doctrine of the eternal validity of the Law placed a veto upon any religious development, and that, as a consequence, men who felt that they had a message from God were compelled to present it under the ægis of one of the great names of the past. This, however, never seems to have driven such writers to rebel against the iron hand of the Law. They continued loyally to uphold its claims. Thus Test. Levi xiv. 4, says: "Ye bring a curse upon our race because the light of the Law was given to lighten every man, this ye desire to destroy." Similarly Sirach ix. 15: "With intelligence let thy communing be, and all thy converse in the Law of the Most High." Their writings, none the less, developed the mystical and spiritual side of religion, as opposed to the formal and legal side; and they therefore, in many respects, go beyond the requirements of the Mosaic code and approximate to the teaching of Christ. For instance, the doctrine of the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs upon the subject of "forgiveness" far transcends the old legal concession of "an eye for an eye," which, at best, inculcated a mere negative virtue in placing a restriction upon excessive revenge. In Test. Gad the positive precept of full forgiveness is enjoined in words which certainly underlie the precepts of Jesus: "Love ye one another from the heart; and if a man sin against thee, cast forth the poison of hate and speak peaceably to him, and in thy soul hold not guile; and if he confess and repent, forgive him." (vi. 3). This and the following verses show close affinities of thought and diction with such

passages as Matthew xviii. 15: "And if thy brother sin against thee, go and show him his fault between him and thee alone . . ."; and with Luke xvii. 3: "If thy brother sin, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. . . .". The same pseudepigraphical work, which—with the exception of some anti-Maccabean additions and some Christian interpolations—Dr. Charles dates towards the close of the second century B.C., is the first to combine the cardinal duties of loving God and one's neighbour. Thus in Test. Daniel we read, "Love the Lord through all thy life, and one another with a true heart." (v. 3); and in Test. Issachar, "Love the Lord and your neighbour." (v. 2). "On these two commandments hangeth the whole Law and the Prophets," said Jesus (Matt. xxii. 40), a century and a half after the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs was written.

It is evident that the teaching of the Pseudepigraphical writers, if pressed to its logical conclusion, would undermine the position which remained satisfied with the "righteousness which is of the Law." Accordingly, the step which Jesus took of definitely formulating this conclusion (Matt. v. 21 ff.: "Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you") was, in part, the outcome of these unknown authors' inspiration. It was left to St. Paul's energetic genius for organisation to establish a religion which combined this new outlook with the strict morality of Judaism.

Sheol.—The Old Testament regards man's existence in Sheol after death as a kind of anæmic shadowy life. The distinctions which held in this world were continued there. Thus, in Isaiah xiv. 9—a writing of the

latter part of the fifth century B.C.—the dead kings of the nations are represented as rising from their thrones in Sheol to greet the king of Babylon on his arrival there. Sheol is outside Yahweh's jurisdiction. Hezekiah in his sickness laments (Isa. xxxviii. 10 ff.) :

" I shall go down into the gates of Sheol ;

I shall not see Yahweh ;

For Sheol cannot praise thee ; death cannot celebrate thee ;

They that go down into the pit cannot hope for thy truth."

Further, Sheol is an abode shared alike by good and evil ; for a man was regarded as receiving his full meed of reward or of punishment during his life upon earth. This latter belief could not long stand the test of experience, and the Prophets' doctrine of individual retribution prompted the questionings of Job, Ecclesiastes, and Psalms. On the whole, the Apocrypha still teaches the Old Testament conception of Sheol. Thus Jesus the son of Sirach (c. 200–175 B.C.) counsels : " Fear not death, it is thy destiny. Remember that the former and the latter share it with thee . . . (be it) for a thousand years, or for a hundred, or for ten (that thou livest) ; in Sheol there are no reproaches concerning life." (Ecclus. xli. 3, 4).

Among the Pseudepigraphical writers a less crude view finds expression. 1 Enoch, in a passage that must be dated not earlier than 100 B.C., " delivers himself of a sustained polemic against the Old Testament doctrines of Sheol," in chapters xci–xciv. Judgment and resurrection follow this life, according to this writer, *e.g.* xci. 9, 10 : " They (the heathen) shall be cast into the judgment of fire . . . and the

righteous shall arise from their sleep ” ; and civ. 3, 4, and 6, “ And, in your cry, cry for judgment, and it shall appear to you. . . . Be hopeful and cast not away your hope, for ye shall have joy as the angels in heaven . . . ye shall be companions of the hosts of heaven.”

In the Apocryphal books of the first century B.C., we find that the Old Testament position with regard to Sheol is largely abandoned. In 2 Macc. xii. 42 ff., Judas Maccabæus is mentioned as making atonement for the idolatrous Israelites who had fallen in battle. The writer comments upon this action in these words : “ (He did) therein right well and honourably, in that he took thought for a resurrection Wherefore he made the propitiation for them that had died, that they might be released from their sin.” Here moral improvement in Sheol is regarded as possible. In the writings of the first century A.D., Sheol is mostly looked upon as a waiting place.

Thus the Jews’ conception of Sheol was continually changing between 300 B.C. and 100 A.D. This unsettled condition has left its mark upon Christianity, for Jesus mainly directed attention, even in such a parable as that of Dives and Lazarus, to present responsibilities and to final issues. He left the question as to the nature of Sheol undetermined.

The Resurrection.—“ The fundamental and far-reaching difference,” says Mr. C. G. Montefiore, “ between Judaism of 350 B.C., and that of A.D. 50, would be that in 350 B.C. the average Jew believed that, as far as any bliss or happiness was concerned (whether lower or higher), death was the end ; whereas in A.D. 50 he believed that, for the righteous, at any rate, the higher happiness would not actually be experienced till beyond the

grave.”¹ This belief in a resurrection developed very slowly. In Zechariah viii. 4, and Isaiah lxxv. 20, 22, the first step towards it, *i.e.* that of a great extension of human life, is foretold: “There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, every man with his staff in his hand for very age.” (Zech. viii. 4). “There shall be no more . . . an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days; for the child shall die a hundred years old For as the days of a tree shall be the days of my people, and my chosen shall long enjoy the work of their hand.” (Isa. lxxv. 20, 22). Job xiv. 7-14, witnesses the longing for a resurrection, which was generally regarded as vain:

“For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again: . . .

“But man dieth and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? . . .

“So man lieth down and riseth not; till the heavens be no more they shall not awake, nor be roused out of their sleep.

“O that thou wouldest appoint me a set time and remember me!

“All the days of my warfare would I wait till my release should come.”

But in chapter xix. 25 ff., the writer rises to a conviction of, at least, a temporary resurrection for the righteous man who had been misjudged, such as would enable him to witness his vindication:

“I know that my avenger liveth,
And that at last he shall stand above (my) grave [or ‘corpse’].
And after my skin hath been destroyed,
Without my body I shall see God,
Whom I shall see for myself;
And mine eyes shall behold, and not another.”

¹ *Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 36.

Among the first explicit teachings of a resurrection is Dan. xii. 2, where Israelites, both good and bad, are said to rise and be judged. References which are possibly earlier (Cheyne and others date the chapters c. 300 B.C.) are found in Isa. xxv. 8: "He hath swallowed death for ever"; and Isa. xxvi. 19: "Thy dead shall live: my dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead."

It is, however, only in the post-canonical literature that the hope of resurrection fully dawns. The writings of 1 Enoch made it "a commonplace of Jewish theology."¹ The following quotations illustrate this:—1 Enoch v. 8: "And then there shall be bestowed upon the elect wisdom, and they shall all live and never again sin."; 1 Enoch lxi. 5: "And these measures shall reveal all the secrets of the depths of the earth, and those who have been destroyed by the desert, and those who have been devoured by the beasts, and those who have been devoured by the fish of the sea, that they may return and stay themselves on the day of the Elect One; for none shall be destroyed before the Lord of Spirits, and none can be destroyed."; Ps. Sol. iii. 11, 16: "The destruction of the sinner is for ever . . . but they that fear the Lord shall rise to life eternal." The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs (c. 137–107 B.C.²) represents the resurrection in a manner which recalls St. Matthew's gospel: "Then shall ye see Enoch, Noah, Shem and Abraham and Isaac and Jacob rising on the right hand in gladness. Then shall we also

¹ Charles, *Apoc. and Pseud.*, vol. ii. p. 185.

² *Ibid.*, p. 289.

rise, each one over our tribe Then also all men shall arise, some unto glory, and some unto shame." (Test. Ben. x. 6-8). By the first century A.D. it is held that all men, Jews and Gentiles, would rise again from the dead for a final judgment. Thus from the Old Testament position we reach by gradual stages the doctrine of the New Testament upon the subject of resurrection.

It is interesting to notice the various views which were abroad concerning the precise nature of this resurrection. The oldest idea, and one which never failed to find adherents, was that the actual body which was buried would rise again. For instance, in 2 Maccabees vii. 10, 11, the third of the seven valiant martyr brothers "stretched forth his hand courageously and nobly said, 'From heaven I possess these; and for His Law's sake I contemn these; and from Him I hope to receive these back again.'" This materialistic view remains that of orthodox Christianity as expressed in her creed: "I believe in the resurrection of the flesh (*carnis*)."

In some pseudepigrapha, particularly those of a Hellenistic tendency, a resurrection of the spirit is substituted. Thus Wisdom teaches: "The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God and no torment shall touch them" (iii. 1); and in viii. 19, 20, the writer says: "When I was a goodly child a good soul fell to my lot. Nay rather, being good, I came into a body undefiled," showing how unmaterialistic his views of existence were. Jubilees xxiii. 31 (date c. 153-105 B.C.), is the earliest attested instance of this belief in a resurrection of the spirit: "Their bones (*i.e.* of the righteous) shall rest in peace, and their spirits shall have much joy." It is next found

in 1 Enoch xci-xciv, and in the *Parables* (date c. 94-64 B.C.): "And the righteous and elect shall have risen from the earth . . . and they shall be clothed with garments of glory." (lxii. 15). It reappears in the synoptic gospels, e.g. Mark xii. 25: "When they shall rise from the dead, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels in heaven."

At the beginning of the Christian era some held that only the good should have a body. For instance, Josephus says,¹ "The Pharisees say that all souls are incorruptible; but that the souls of good men only pass over other bodies,² whereas the souls of bad men are subject to eternal punishment. But the Sadducees . . . take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades." 2 Baruch xlix. 2-end of chapter li (date c. 50 B.C.-A.D. 10) preaches a resurrection of the actual body which had been buried. This body, however, would be transformed into an angelic body, once the identity of the dead person had been recognized: "For the earth shall assuredly restore the dead, it shall make no change in their form . . . for then it will be necessary to show to the living that the dead have come to life again . . . and it shall come to pass, when they have severally recognized them whom they now know, then shall judgment grow strong . . . and then shall the aspect of those who are afterwards condemned be changed, and the glory of those who are justified . . . that they may be able to acquire and receive the world that does not die." (l. 2-li. 3).

¹ B. J., ii. 8. 14.

² This Pharisaic belief in reincarnation may have had some influence upon St. Paul's doctrine of the indwelling Christ.

The Essenes believed in a resurrection of the soul ; and some of the Alexandrian Jews, like the Greeks, held the immortality of the soul, *i.e.* its simple continuance after death. This latter view makes a resurrection superfluous, and probably underlies the outlook of those Christians at Corinth who held that there was no resurrection (1 Cor. xv. 12*b*). St. Paul upholds the Jewish doctrine in so far that he maintains that there must be a resurrection ; but he admits the contention of the Gentiles that the future life would be one of spirit—"flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God." (1 Cor. xv. 50). His postulate of a "spiritual body" is a compromise.¹

It is worth noticing that it was the Christians' belief in the resurrection of Jesus which—together with the doctrine of his miraculous birth—enabled them to identify him both with the promised scion of the house of David (*i.e.* a human king), and also with the pre-existing "Son of Man" who should appear in the clouds.

Angelology and Demonology.—In the Old Testament neither angels nor demons are much in evidence. "The angel of Yahweh" is practically equivalent to Yahweh in manifestation. Isaiah (vi. 1 ff.) speaks of Yahweh's angel train. In Ezekiel and Zechariah angels act as interpreters of the prophets' visions.

The post-exilic writings show the result of contact with Persian beliefs. In Tobit xii. 15, the seven angels of Zoroastrianism are referred to : "I am Raphael, one of the seven holy angels, which present the prayers of the saints, and go in before the Holy One." Six of these angels are mentioned by name in various Jewish writings of the last centuries B.C. Two of them,

¹ Cf. Lake, *Earlier Epistles of St. Paul*, pp. 217-219.

Gabriel and Michael, appear in the New Testament (Jude 9 ; Rev. xii. 7 ; Luke i. 19). Possibly Yahweh was regarded as the seventh, the principal angel, by the Jews, in the same way that Ahoura Mazda was by the Persians. As in Persian angelology, each of these six angels has his own particular work in Jewish post-exilic books. This development in the doctrine of angels was a natural compensation for the belief in Yahweh's supreme transcendence, which grew up in later Judaism.¹ Angels bridge over the gulf between men and the God whose very name was too holy to be uttered.

The doctrine of guardian angels is first met with in Jubilees xxxv. 17, where Isaac bids Rebekah "fear not on account of Jacob ; for the guardian of Jacob is great and powerful and honoured, and praised more than the guardian of Esau." In New Testament times this belief in guardian angels seems to have been generally held among the Jews. In Matthew xviii. 10, Jesus speaks of the guardian angels of children. In Acts xii. 15, when Rhoda tells the company assembled in the house of Mark's mother that Peter stands before the gate, they reply, "It is his angel." In later Judaism this doctrine was much elaborated. For instance, it was believed that, when a man returned from the synagogue on the Sabbath, God sent him a protecting angel for every precept which he had observed. Other beliefs are more fantastic, even debased.²

On the subject of demons the Old Testament is vague. It is an "evil spirit from Yahweh" that troubles Saul (1 Sam. xvi. 14). In Isaiah (xiii. 21 and

¹ Mr. Montefiore admits this for the apocalyptic writers but denies it for the Rabbis. "The ordinary rabbinic Jew approached God directly, and felt his answer in the heart." (*Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. i. pp. 47, 48.)

² Cf. Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. ii. p. 752.

xxxiv. 14), certain weird creatures, such as the "night-hag" (לֵילִית), are referred to. This לֵילִית plays a great part in the Talmudic demonology; the cabbalistic Rabbis forged a whole legend in which the spirit is said to have taken a feminine form in order to deceive Adam.¹ In the Book of Job the evil spirit which afflicts man is simply called "the adversary" (הַשָּׂטָן).

The demonology of the post-canonical books approximates to that of the New Testament. Demons are described as disembodied spirits. For instance, in 1 Enoch xvi. 1: "From the days of the slaughter and destruction and death of the giants, from the souls of whose flesh the spirits, having gone forth, shall destroy without incurring judgment . . . until the day of consummation, the great judgment." Matthew xii. 43-45, represents demons as wandering, bodiless spirits; and Matthew viii. 29—where the demons which possessed the two men at Gadara are described as crying out, "Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?"—reflects the belief of 1 Enoch that such spirits "should destroy without incurring judgment . . . until the day of consummation." According to Wisdom ii. 24, it was a "satan" who led Eve astray: "By the envy of the devil death entered into the world." (cf. 1 Enoch lxix. 6). Moreover, in Alexandrian books, the elemental forces, famine, death, and the rest, are personified, and the way is thus prepared for the reception of the Greek idea that everything had its "demon."

Jesus accepted the current doctrines, as he did those of Sheol; but he nowhere intimates that a belief in them is a *sine qua non* of discipleship.

Vicarious Suffering.—The redemptive effect of vicari-

¹ Cf. Lenormant, *Chaldean Magic*, p. 38.

ous suffering, which is such a feature of Christian doctrine, finds very definite expression in 2 Maccabees vii. 37, 38, and in 4 Maccabees vi. 26, 29. Of the aged priest Eliazar, dying by torture under Antiochus Epiphanes, we read : " But when the fire had already reached his bones and he was about to give up the ghost, he lifted up his eyes to God and said, ' Thou, O God, knowest that I, though I might save myself, am dying by fiery torments for thy Law. Be merciful unto thy people, and let our punishments be a satisfaction in their behalf. Make my blood their purification, and take my soul to ransom their souls.' " (4 Macc. vi. 26-29). Similarly, in xvii. 22, the martyrs of the Maccabean period are extolled in the following terms : " Through these our country was purified, they having, as it were, become a ransom for our nation's sin ; and through the blood of these righteous men and the propitiation of their death, the Divine Providence delivered Israel that before was evil entreated." R. B. Townshend dates this book 63 B.C.-A.D. 38, *i.e.* prior to the Christian writings.¹

Such passages form a link between the teaching of Isaiah liii and that of the New Testament. In connection with the Christian doctrine of propitiation, a passage from Test. of the Twelve Patriarchs which has affinities with Romans (xii. 1), Ephesians (v. 2), and Hebrews, may be quoted : " In the sixth heaven are the archangels who minister and make propitiation to the Lord for all the sins of the righteous, offering to the Lord a sweet-smelling savour, a reasonable and a bloodless offering." (Test. Levi iii. 5, 6).

After 1 Enoch this book, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, had more influence on the New Testament

¹ Cf. Charles, *op. cit.*, vol. ii. p. 654.

writings than any other. We will conclude this chapter with a few quotations from it, which show how familiar the New Testament writers, and particularly St. Paul, must have been with the book.

Test. Joseph i. 5, 6 (*cf.* Matt. xxv. 35, 36)—

“ I was an hungered, and the Lord himself nourished me.
I was alone, and God comforted me.
I was sick, and the Lord visited me.
I was in prison, and my God showed favour unto me.
I was in bonds, and he released me.”

Test. Levi vi. 2 (*cf.* 1 Thess. ii. 16)—

“ But the wrath of the Lord came upon them to the uttermost.”

Test. Issachar vii. 1 (*cf.* 1 Cor. iv. 4)—

“ I . . . am not conscious of committing any sin.”

Test. Naphthali viii. 8 (*cf.* 1 Cor. vii. 5)—

“ For there is a season for a man to embrace his wife ; and a season to abstain therefrom for his prayer.”

Test. Gad v. 7 (*cf.* 2 Cor. vii. 10)—

“ For true repentance after a godly sort driveth away darkness and leadeth the mind to salvation.”

Test. Asher vi. 2 (*cf.* Rom. i. 32)—

“ They both do the evil thing and have pleasure in them that do it.”

Test. Benjamin iv. 3 (*cf.* Rom. xii. 21)—

“ By doing good he overcometh evil.”

CHAPTER VIII

JUDAISM AT THE TIME OF CHRIST

THE religion of the Jews at the time of Christ has already been touched upon in treating of the Messianic Hope and of the apocryphal and pseudepigraphical writings (Chapters VI and VII). We noticed in these chapters certain passages in the Pseudepigrapha which evidence advance from the doctrines of the Old Testament towards the teaching of Christ. The post-canonical writings of Judaism show that by the time of Jesus an enlightened minority of the Jews were already convinced of the universal nature of God's kingdom, of the necessity for a resurrection, and of the superiority of the religion of the heart over that of the Law. We must now consider (1) the condition of religion in Palestine, and (2) the characteristics and tendencies of Judaism among the "diaspora" of the west, at the beginning of the first century A.D.

Palestinian Judaism

In considering Palestinian Judaism at the time of Christ, it is necessary to begin our survey some two centuries earlier. The Maccabean struggle, "the watershed of those centuries," which began with such magnificent enthusiasm, had for a time promised to fulfil the hopes of those who were "waiting for the consolation of Israel." But within a century it had degenerated into a series of selfish intrigues, in which

the Jews were really playing the part of puppets upon a stage which was larger than they could visualize. In 63 B.C. Pompey captured Jerusalem, and the Roman power, which the mistaken policy of Judas Maccabæus had originally called in as an ally, placed Palestine under the jurisdiction of the governor of Syria. Hyrcanus II., a man naturally weak—"unmanly and foolish," Josephus calls him¹—was deprived of kingly power. He was allowed to retain the office of high priest; but the only person of any moment in Palestine was Antipater, who, under the Maccabees, had been appointed ruler of Idumea, a district between Samaria and Ephraim. Antipater had supported the cause of Hyrcanus against the claims of the other Maccabean prince Aristobulus, when these two rivals had appealed to Pompey. Now, as the friend of Hyrcanus, he became the virtual ruler of the Jews.² Amid the confusions of the years which followed, it required a man of unscrupulous cunning and determination to keep in favour with the ruling party at Rome. Antipater and his son Herod were equal to the occasion. They transferred their allegiance from the defeated Pompey to the victorious Cæsar. When the latter fell under the daggers of the conspirators and Antipater died the victim of a nationalist plot, Herod once again succeeded in ingratiating himself into the favour of the new powers at Rome. At one period he was in extreme danger, Antigonus, the nephew of Hyrcanus II., having made himself master of Jerusalem with the help of the Parthians, and rendered his uncle unfit for the high-priesthood by depriving him of his ears. Herod, however, had been warned of the secret understanding between Antigonus and the Parthians in time

¹ *Ant.* 14. 9. 5.

² *Cf.* Josephus, *Ant.* 14. 9.

to effect his escape from the city. With indomitable energy he overcame all obstacles, and eventually made his way to Rome in order to plead before Antony and Cæsar for the Jewish throne.¹ His mission was a complete success. He was proclaimed "King of Judea" by the Senate.² He returned to Palestine and, with the help of the Romans, proceeded to make himself master of his new kingdom. He now married Mariamme, who, as the granddaughter of Hyrcanus II. and the niece of Antigonus, combined the two rival families of the Maccabees, which were both claiming the throne. With the capture of Jerusalem, which Antigonus was defending, Herod became master of Palestine. His ferocious cruelty now began to display itself without disguise. Antigonus was executed by the Romans at Herod's request, and forty-five of the noblest citizens were put to death.³ Shortly afterwards Aristobulus, a youth of seventeen, the brother of Mariamme, was secretly drowned, because as high priest his popularity had aroused Herod's insane jealousy. Within a few years Herod had removed all who were of Maccabean blood, not even sparing the aged Hyrcanus nor the beautiful Mariamme.

The Maccabean hope perished with Herod's success, but it did not leave the Jews without a heritage. It saved Palestine, once for all, from Hellenization. Even Herod did not venture openly to Græcize Judaism. He introduced Roman customs and games into Jerusalem and built Roman cities in the Holy Land. But for these, and other conformities to heathenism, he excused himself to the Jews, declaring that they were political necessities if they desired Rome to remain

¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 14. 14. 2, 3.

² *Ibid.*, §§ 4 and 5.

³ *Ibid.*, *Ant.* 15. 1. 2.

their friend. Herod was well aware that the spirit of martyrdom, which the Maccabean age had fostered, still lived on after that dynasty had passed away. This fact Pilate discovered, to his chagrin, when he endeavoured to retain Cæsar's effigies in Jerusalem.¹ This spirit of martyrdom passed over into Christianity. The willingness to suffer death which characterized the early Christians was a legacy from the Jewish Church. Another instance of the influence of the Maccabean revival is to be found in the intensification of the Messianic Hope which it excited. The gradual waning of human expectations served only to increase the anticipation of divine intervention. At the end of the first century B.C. there were many who "looked for redemption in Jerusalem" (*cf.* Mark xv. 43; Luke ii. 25 and 38). Idumean Herod, indeed, desired that he should be regarded as the Messiah. The extent of his kingdom was coterminous with that prophesied to the Messianic King, and he had rebuilt the temple and enriched it with a magnificence greater even than that of Solomon. Both these facts, combined with his position as king of the Jews in the eyes of Rome, seemed to give Herod some claim to be considered as the national deliverer. But his semi-heathenism was apparent beneath his professed Judaism, and his cruelty and wickedness had rendered him hateful to the people. Moreover he was, as Josephus says, "of no more than a vulgar family, and of no eminent extraction, but one that was subject to other kings."²

The outstanding feature of Palestinian Judaism at the time of Christ was, however, one which had been prominent before the entry of the Maccabees upon the stage of history. It had been, in fact, the main-

¹ Josephus, *Ant.* 18. 3. 1.

² *Ibid.*, 14. 16. 4.

spring and source of their heroism. This feature was an almost fanatical devotion to set rules of conduct, as laid down in the Mosaic Law, and as expanded by the Scribes in the "Halakhah," or "walking" (of the Fathers), in the "Mishna," or "second" law, and in the "Haggadah," or "oral teaching." Ever since Nehemiah's day this veneration for the Law and its exposition had been in existence. Accordingly, it is not surprising that, by the time of Christ, the Scribes—a body of men who were officially ordained by the laying-on of hands as the guardians and expositors of the Law—should be regarded as the religious aristocracy of the nation. People who knew not the Law were "accursed."

If this outlook tended to create a false reverence for intellectualism, it at least discountenanced a vulgar aristocracy of wealth. Any of the "people of the land" could—as did Akiba early in the second century—rise to the position of a leading Rabbi by long and assiduous study of the Law. On the other hand, even the chief priests, if they cared little about legal minutiae, were classed as "ame ha aretz" (people of the land). However, this inclusion of knowledge as an essential part of religion had the effect of relegating all the non-scholarly class to an inferior religious plane. Jesus himself an "am ha aretz"—differed on this point from the Scribes and Pharisees. Both they and he regarded repentance and the keeping of the commandments as indispensable qualifications for entering the kingdom of God; but he taught that the Law was fulfilled if it were kept in spirit, whereas they required its exact observance in accordance with the letter of their tradition which had been handed down. This, with all its various

cases of application (*i.e.* its "casuistry"), could be grasped only by a man well educated in legal subtleties ; whereas the spirit of the commandment provided guidance which could be apprehended by anyone who was sincere.

Alongside the Scribe, but having no official position, was the Pharisee. Both held aloof from political intrigue, and both regarded the Law with excessive veneration. The scorn of Jesus was directed against this latter characteristic,¹ and this possibly has led posterity to form a lower estimate of the religion of the Scribes and Pharisees than is altogether just. Professor Lake maintains that their system of faith and worship "probably represents the highest form of a religion based upon codified ethics that the world has ever seen."² Professor T. R. Glover says of the Pharisees that they "helped to develop the moral sense of the Jewish race and to quicken their thinking."³ Certainly one great part of their work was to individualize the interpretation of the Law and the Prophets. Their tendency was anti-clerical, and they were more liberal, merciful, and idealistic than the other great party in Judaism, the Sadducees.⁴ The "tradition"⁵ by which—in opposition to their rivals—they supplemented the Law is criticized by Jesus in the Gospels. But it was originally employed by them in order to ease the Law's burdens and to modify its impossible obligations.

Opposed to the Scribes and Pharisees were the

¹ Cf. Matt. xxiii. 23 ff. ; Luke xi. 39, 42 ; xviii. 9 f.

² *Landmarks of Early Christianity*, p. 31.

³ *Progress in Religion*, p. 306.

⁴ Cf. *Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. i., Appendix D, pp. 436-438.

⁵ According to the Rabbis, this tradition had been passed down from Moses to the men of the Great Synagogue by Joshua, the Elders, and the Prophets.

Sadducees, whose outlook was political rather than religious. They belonged to the aristocratic circles. They were, for the most part, wealthy men, conservative, orthodox, never carried away by religious enthusiasm, always recognizing that their position as leaders of the people depended upon their ability to keep the latter quiet under the Roman rule. They interpreted the Law with the strictest rigour. In the New Testament their distinguishing tenet is the denial of a resurrection.¹

A party in Palestine about which we have little explicit information in the New Testament is the Nationalist party. This sect was at one time designated "Pious" (חסידים), but, after A.D. 66, it assumed the name "Zealots," or "Cananæans." Josephus² speaks of them as the "fourth philosophy." He says: "Judas the Galilean was the author. These men agree in all other things with the Pharisaic notions; but they have an inviolable attachment to liberty; and they say that God is to be their only ruler and Lord. They also do not value dying any kinds of death . . . nor can any such fear make them call any man Lord." Although this Nationalist party was quiescent during the ministry of Jesus, it was always ready, when the slightest opportunity occurred or the least encouragement was given, to offer armed opposition to any but a theocratic government. Herod, when a young man, had cruelly repressed one of these risings led by Ezekias of Galilee. This same Galilean family had, before the fall of Jerusalem, furnished many martyrs to the Nationalist hopes. One of these was Judas, whom Gamaliel mentions

¹ Mark xii. 18; Luke xx. 27; Acts xxiii. 8; cf. Josephus, *Wars*, ii. 8. 14.

² *Ant.* 18. 1. 6.

with typical rabbinic disdain in Acts v. 37. When reading the hyperbolic teaching of Jesus on the subject of pacificity (Matt. v. 38 ff.), we should remember that a zealot figured among his twelve disciples,¹ and also that he was surrounded by these Nationalist Galilean highlanders, who were eager at all times for anything that could be construed into an incitement to strike in the spirit of a Gideon.

A sect, which is of special interest as embodying certain views of Judaism with those of the oriental Mystery Religions, is the Essenes. Dr. Edersheim regards their name 'Εσσηνοί as the Greek equivalent for חיצונים, "outsiders," a sobriquet conferred upon them by the Pharisees—who had the "moulding of theological language"²—because they stood "outside" Pharisaism and the synagogue. The Essenes were an ascetic sect, about four thousand in number, and their internal organization resembled, in some respects, the best monastic orders of mediæval times. They were strict vegetarians, the slaughter of animals—and consequently (so Philo appears to assert) the sacrifices of the temple—being forbidden them.³ Matter was regarded by them as inherently evil; and they adopted every means of mortifying the flesh, such as fasting, celibacy, and frequent lustrations. In this manner they aimed at reaching the supersensual plane of vision and seership. Holding these views of matter, they did not believe in a resurrection of the body. Their prayers were directed to

¹ Unless—as the editors of *Beginnings of Christianity* suggest (vol. i. p. 425)—the Greek of Luke should be translated "Simon the Zealous," with no reference to any political party.

² *L. and T.*, vol. i. p. 337.

³ In the time of Christ, when the worship of most Jews centred round the synagogues, this would not involve a complete breach with Judaism.

the rising sun as the embodiment of divine light. Membership in this sect was restricted to adult men, after three years of probation. At the end of this period an oath of secrecy was taken, and the would-be member was fully initiated. Josephus, who submitted to the probationary course,¹ professes to give the terms of this oath, which concludes with a vow "to equally preserve the books belonging to their sect, and the names of angels."² We have already seen that the development of the doctrine of angels among the Jews was largely due to Persian influence.³ The Book of Jubilees has been mentioned as containing the first reference to guardian angels. It is not improbable that this book, with its references to angels, to secret knowledge of herbal remedies, to visions and prophecies, was actually written by an Essene, inasmuch as all these are subjects in which this sect shows a peculiar interest. Essenic influence certainly appears in the Cabbala, which contains a style of writing not unlike that of the magic papyri of the Hermetic literature. Neither John the Baptist, who, according to the gospels, received and baptized all who simply repented,⁴ nor Jesus, who "came eating and drinking," had any connection with this exclusive esoteric sect, though some writers have maintained the contrary.⁵

Judaism among the Diaspora

As a result of contact with a wider world, the Jews of the diaspora possessed a broader outlook than was

¹ Cf. *Life*, ii.

² *Wars*, ii. 8. 7.

³ *Vide pp.* 81, 82.

⁴ According to Josephus, the baptism of John was not a sign of repentance for the remission of sins, but a bodily purification. If this is true, John has affinities with the Essenes.

⁵ *E.g.* Ginsburg, *Essenes*, p. 24.

known to their compatriots in Palestine. Josephus relates ¹ how a Jewish merchant of the diaspora named Ananias, who had converted Izates, king of Adiabene, to his faith, forbade him to be circumcised, "lest he should himself be in danger of punishment for having been the king's instructor in actions that were of ill reputation. And he said that he might worship God without being circumcised, even though he did resolve to follow the Jewish Law entirely; which worship of God was of a superior nature to circumcision." But later, one, Eleazar, a Jew from Galilee (*i.e.* not one of the diaspora), persuaded the king that the operation was necessary. This more liberal attitude of the diaspora towards the ceremonial of Judaism is further evidenced by Philo. In *De Migratione Abraham* he says: "There are persons who regard the traditional law as a symbol of spiritual life. The symbolic meaning they seek with every care, but despise the literal meaning." How far this estimate of the ceremonial law was general among the Jews of the diaspora is not certain. Philo says that he himself "deprecates such laxness." The very existence of such a sentiment shows a tendency towards a wider and more sympathetic outlook on the part of the Jews of the dispersion; and this was met, on the part of the Gentiles, by a fringe of "God-fearers" round each Jewish synagogue. These φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν, of whom we read so often in Acts, were not actually proselytes according to Schürer, but they had adopted the monotheism, the Sabbath observance, the moral code, and (in some cases) the food-laws of Judaism.² Mr. Montefiore, however, asserts that the

¹ *Ant.* 20. 2. 4.

² Cf. *Geschichte des jüdischen Volkes im Zeitalter Jesu Christi*, 4th ed.

“God-fearers” were regarded by the Jews as being among the elect. “Jewish teachers were wont to lay stress upon the moral rather than the ritual commands of the Law, and if idolatry was forsworn and the simplest rules of morality observed, they held and taught that such fearers of God would inherit the joys of the world to come.”¹ Whether these φοβούμενοι τὸν θεόν were within or without “Israel,” their reflex influence upon the Judaism of the diaspora must have been considerable. Many of them doubtless became proselytes. Their very attraction to Judaism proves that they were all men of considerable moral calibre and of a deep religious mentality. Such men could not fail to exert a powerful influence upon any religious community to which they attached themselves. Probably it was largely through this channel that “the general spiritual anxiety, which was widely diffused in the later Hellenistic world,” also infected Judaism, and so rendered the religion of the diaspora “more anxious and pessimistic, more sombre and perplexed” than the rabbinic type in Palestine.²

The Synagogue.—The connecting link between the Jews of Palestine and those of the dispersion was the institution of the synagogue. Synagogues are not mentioned in the Old Testament. The circumstances of the Exile doubtless suggested the rationale of their establishment. Some meeting-place where the Scriptures could be read and where common prayer could be offered would then become essential, if the spirit and observances of Judaism were to continue in spite of the absence of the temple and of the sacred shrines of Palestine. Before the time

¹ *Judaism and St. Paul*, p. 63.

² Cf. Montefiore, *op. cit.*, pp. 96-98, 114.

of Jesus the synagogue service was a characteristic feature of Jewish worship. The temple at Jerusalem was still the sacred place round which the religion, patriotism, and hope of each pious Jew centred. It was the place to which every Israelite hoped to make at least one pilgrimage during his lifetime, and to which he gladly sent his yearly offering. But, for most Jews, worship was performed in the synagogue.

The synagogue service somewhat resembled that of the Presbyterian Church to-day. Preaching and reading of the Scripture occupied a prominent place. The election of the "Rulers of the Synagogue" depended upon the choice of the congregation.¹ The chief of these rulers, the ἀρχισυνάγωγος, called up in turn from the worshippers that member whom he had previously asked to act as the reader of the Scriptures, the leader of the prayers, or the preacher. Jewish law required at least ten men as the nucleus of every synagogue.² Accordingly, almost wherever there were Jews there would be found a synagogue where any pious Israelite throughout the Roman Empire could join in the same familiar liturgy, listen to readings from the same sacred lectionary, and take part in the same venerable worship to which he had been accustomed from his earliest youth.

The influence of the institution of the synagogue upon the diffusion of Christianity can hardly be exaggerated. In the first place, it was probably as the members of a new synagogue that the eleven disciples conducted their "prayer and supplication" in the upper room at Jerusalem after the ascension³

¹ Cf. Edersheim, *L. and T.*, vol. i. p. 438.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 434.

³ Cf. Acts vi. 9, where the names of such synagogues in Jerusalem are mentioned.

(Acts i. 13 f.). Consequently the Jewish authorities would have no quarrel with the followers of Jesus now that the political danger, which his preaching had threatened, had apparently been removed. They would merely regard the disciples as ignorant enthusiasts of nationalist Galilee who had been proved to be wrong in their belief as to who the Messiah was. Such a belief, though mistaken, would not involve heterodoxy; for one of the differences between Christianity—at any rate Christianity after the great councils—and Judaism was that the latter “permitted a man to hold or propound almost any views, so long as he contravened not the Law of Moses as it was understood, and adhered in teaching and practice to the traditional ordinances.”¹ This we know both Jesus and his apostles were zealous to do. In the second place, the establishment of Jewish synagogues throughout the Empire facilitated to a remarkable degree the efforts of the first Christian missionaries. The work of Paul cannot be compared with the task of a missionary to-day in non-civilized lands. Dr. Edersheim tells us that the preacher in the synagogue service, at the close of his address, “very generally referred to the great Messianic Hope of Israel.”² When, therefore—as, for example, in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia (Acts xiii. 15)—Paul was asked to preach, his message contained the very news for which his hearers had learned to hope; namely, that He who was shortly coming as Messiah had been seen, and that He had sent Paul to warn His faithful children of the imminence of His approach. Contrast the ease of the apostle’s task with the difficulties which beset modern missionaries, who sometimes cannot even find any equivalent word in the

¹ Edersheim, *op. cit.*, vol. i. p. 105.

² *Ibid.*, p. 449.

crude language of their flock by which to express the most elementary and fundamental Christian truths. This preparation for Christianity which the Jewish synagogues provided partly explains the rapid success of Paul's preaching in Asia Minor and Greece. The diaspora Jews were zealous proselytizers, and the "God-fearers," of whom we have already spoken, would be largely represented among the congregation. Thus the apostle's message in each synagogue was spoken to Gentiles as well as to Jews. These Gentiles found in Christianity the monotheism, ethical elevation, and reverence for family life which had attracted them to Judaism ; while at the same time there was, in the new religion, an absence of those requirements of the Mosaic Law—such as circumcision and regulations about food—which were repellent to the average Gentile. Accordingly the "God-fearers" came over in a body to Christianity, and the Church of Christ thus reaped a harvest from seed which the Jewish synagogues of the diaspora had sown.

Of this diaspora we must now speak in more detail. Agrippa, in the course of a long oration in which he endeavours to persuade the Jews from revolting against Rome, says : "There is no people upon the habitable earth which hath not some portion of you among them."¹ By the time of Christ the Jews had indeed become a "world-nation." The Jewish diaspora of the east, the "Hebrews," and in the west, the "Hellenists," held then, as Jews do to-day, the greater part of the trade and wealth of the world within their power. One of the chief witnesses for the attitude of liberal Judaism toward contemporary pagan thought is Philo, whose brother Alexander

¹ Josephus, *B. J.*, ii. 16. 4.

was the head of the largest banking firm in the commercial centre of the old world, Alexandria, and whose nephews married with members of the family of King Agrippa.

The contact of Judaism with Hellenism was considerably increased by the translation of the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek, which was completed at Alexandria by 221 B.C. This translation, "the Septuagint," was acknowledged as authentic in Palestine, and it had become the "Bible" of the people by the time of Jesus. Such was the case even in Judea, for there Hebrew was only known approximately to the same degree that Latin is by the average Roman Catholic congregation to-day. The ideas of Greek and Jew were brought still more closely together by the apocryphal literature which followed the LXX. These books had as their aim not only the strengthening of Jewish nationalism, but also the reconciliation of Hebrew religion with Greek philosophy.

In the works of Philo, who lived in an interesting and important period (*c.* 25 B.C.—A.D. 45) for the student of Christian origins, we find an extraordinary blending of Judaism, Greek philosophy, and the main ideas of the Gnostic and Mystery Religions. In the opinion of this writer the philosophers of Greece rank "with, but after" Moses. Plato, for example, is "the Great One." Moreover, the Law had not been given for the Jews alone, but was a revelation to the world. Philo's "scriptures" are the Old Testament; but their value for him lies in their allegorical significance, which study and meditation reveal underlying the literal meaning. Thus the Patriarchs typify various virtues, or in some cases the means of attaining religious ecstasy. Jacob's

white, spotted, and speckled sheep (Gen. xxx.) represent souls. "The meaning is, that when the soul receives the divine seed, the first-born births are spotlessly white, like unto light of utmost purity, to radiance of the greatest brilliance. . . ." ¹ Again, when treating of the "divine Spirit" (θεῖον πνεῦμα) Philo says: "It is present with only one class of men—with those who, having stripped themselves of all things in genesis, even to the innermost veil and garment of opinion, come unto God with minds unclothed and naked. And so Moses, having fixed his tent outside the camp—that is, the whole of the body—that is to say, having made firm his mind so that it does not move, begins to worship God; and, entering into the darkness, the unseen land, abideth there, being initiated into the most holy mysteries. And he becomes not only a μύστης, but also a hierophant of revelations, and teacher of divine things, which he will indicate to those who have had their ears made pure. With such kind of men, then, the divine Spirit is ever present, guiding their way aright." ² Thus in Philo's doctrine—as in the teachings of the Greek and Oriental Mysteries—the gulf between human and divine is spanned when the soul leaves the body in a state of ecstasy.

Philo's cosmogony is expressed in these terms: "The Demiurge who made all this universe, is also at the same time Father of what has been brought into existence; while its Mother is the Wisdom of Him who hath made it—with whom God united, though not as man (with woman), and implanted the power of genesis. And she, receiving the seed of God, brought forth with perfect labour His only beloved Son, whom all

¹ Cf. G. R. S. Meade, *Hermes Trismegistos*, vol. i. p. 223.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 211, 212.

may perceive—this Cosmos.”¹ Elsewhere Philo speaks of the Logos as God’s “First-born Son.”² In *De Confus. Ling.*, § 14, Philo, referring to Zech. vi. 12—where “branch” (נֶחֱמָץ) is translated in the LXX as “rising,” or “east” (ἀνατολή)—remarks on the appropriateness of this name for the incorporeal man, the Divine image, adding: “For the Father of things that are hath made him rise as His Eldest Son, whom elsewhere He hath called His First-born, and who, when he had been begotten, imitating the ways of his Sire, and contemplating His Archetypal patterns, fashions the species.” Philo, in another place, denominates the Logos as “The second God who is His (=the Father’s) Reason,”³ as “The Mediator,” and as “The Oldest Angel.”⁴

Philo thus combines, in a manner which is not always consistent, such different conceptions of the Logos as the Archetypal Idea of Plato; the Stoic doctrine of an immanent God, a “World Reason,” pervading all matter; and the Jewish “Angel of Yahweh,” the manifest form of God. These instances of Philo’s bold and broad-minded blending of the ideas of Greek philosophy, of the Hermetic literature, and of the Mystery Religions with those of the Hebrew faith give us some conception of the spirit of syncretism which was abroad, even among the Jewish diaspora. The synagogues of these Hellenistic Jews must have been a peculiarly advantageous starting-point for Paul’s missionary campaign.

It is interesting to observe the degree to which a Jew of the first century could depart from the religious

¹ Cf. *Hermes Trismegistos*, vol. i. p. 224.

² *De Agric.*, § 12.

³ Cf. Eusebius, *Præp. Evang.*, vii. 13.

⁴ In *De Confus. Ling.*, § 28.

standpoint of the orthodox Hebrew faith and still regard himself as a loyal member of his Church. In this respect Philo goes much further than Paul. In Philo's writings the plain moral teachings of Judaism—the religion which, in its simplest and yet its noblest and most personal form, Jesus taught—has been infected with the speculation of metaphysics; the spirit of the Mystery Religions, of which the highest aim was the attainment of individual ecstasy, has almost entirely supplanted the spirit of national religion, which aimed at the good of society by subjugating the individual to a strict code. Philo, it is true, shows the best side of this Gnostic faith. "Study" and "a good natural disposition" are, with him, two ways of achieving the ecstasy desired. But it is obvious that lesser men would adopt more questionable means to effect the same end.

In conclusion, it may be mentioned that Philo's writings alone are sufficient evidence to prove that Gnosticism was in the field before Christianity; doubtless a considerable time before, since the Jewish doctor nowhere represents himself as an innovator. He was, unquestionably, but one among many who were making an eclectic faith for themselves. Such also was Paul with his combination of Judaism and the sacramental doctrines of the Mystery Religions; and such was the writer of the Fourth Gospel, who takes the step of personifying the Logos and of identifying Him with the historic Jesus.

The key to the religious views of the New Testament writers often lies in approaching them from the side of their historical connection. This connection, as we have seen, is revealed to some extent by the writings of post-canonical Judaism. But there is much in

early Christian thought that has no affinity with Judaism. The key to this side of Christianity is to be found partly in the Græco-Roman religion and literature which prevailed in the first century of our era, and partly in the conceptions of the oriental Mysteries which were then overrunning the Empire. These will be considered in the next four chapters.

III.—ANTECEDENTS OF THE PAGAN CONTRIBUTION TO CHRISTIANITY

CHAPTER IX

ORIENTAL MYSTERY RELIGIONS : THE WORSHIP OF ISIS
AND OSIRIS, OF ISHTAR AND TAMMUZ, OF APHRODITE
AND ADONIS, AND OF CYBELE AND ATTIS

AN investigation of the non-Jewish formative influences upon Christianity involves a brief but individual treatment of the religions of those peoples who lived around the eastern Mediterranean from Africa to Italy. For, as will appear later, the ritual and beliefs of these peoples survived, in the form of a curious religious amalgam, among the Gentile converts to Christianity of at least the first three centuries of our era.

Isis and Osiris.

In Egypt, the worship of Isis and of her consort Osiris is the religion of chief importance for our purpose. This cult became prominent under the New Empire, 1700-1000 B.C.

The story of Osiris and Isis is narrated by Plutarch,¹ and may be supplemented by native Egyptian accounts. Osiris is represented as a king of Egypt, of divine parentage, who, with the co-operation of his sister-wife Isis, did much to ameliorate the condition of his subjects, teaching them agriculture and the arts. He at last met his death by being entrapped into a coffin by his crafty brother Set. Set eventually dismembered Osiris's body ; but the sorrowing Isis sought the corpse

¹ *De Iside et Osiride.*

by land and sea, and collected it piece by piece. Then she swathed it in mummy bands, and, aided by her sister Nephthys with her son Anubis, restored Osiris to life. Thenceforth he reigns as "lord of the underworld," "ruler of the dead." Finally, Set is punished by Osiris's posthumous son Horus, who is also a rejuvenation of his father.

As regards the ritual upon which this myth is based, we find that the celebration of Osiris's passion was held once a year. The image of a cow, the animal sacred to Isis, appears to have been carried round the temple, or merely exhibited to the people, swathed in black. This proceeding symbolized the sorrowing and the search of Isis for her lost brother. After this ceremony there followed an enactment of the discovery and restoration to life of the dead god, when mourning gave place to enthusiastic joy.

The legend of Osiris has been explained as a Sun myth. Osiris=Sun, born of Seb and Nut (=Earth and Heaven). Set=Night, the destroyer of the Sun. Isis=Dawn, who restores the Sun after his destruction by Night, and who also gives birth to Horus, the new rejuvenated Sun that takes vengeance on Set and ascends his father's throne. Nephthys=the Western Horizon, the sister of Isis, the Eastern Horizon, and the mother of Anubis, the god of Darkness. The myth "certainly had a solar significance in the minds of those who reflected on religion." But this does not mean that its origin is to be sought in the sky. Such an explanation does not find a place for the dismemberment of Osiris; nor does it recognize the fact that his festival was celebrated annually, and not daily. Moreover, even by those who support the solar origin of the myth, it is admitted that from the end of the seventh century

B.C. onwards (the Greek period), Isis had become a "universal nature goddess." Almost certainly both Osiris and Isis were in olden times "rustic corn deities adored with uncouth rites by Egyptian swains."¹ This aspect of their career survives in that part of the myth which represents them as teaching men to cultivate grain, to prepare beer from barley, to grow the vine, and to tread the grape. Whatever their origin, both Osiris and Isis became, as the *Book of the Dead* shows, the embodiment of noble emotions of mankind. Before Osiris and the forty-two assessors each Egyptian expected to be brought and judged at the "trial of the souls of the departed." There the dead would be called upon to make declaration of his innocence in such terms as these: "I have committed no revenge in act or thought; no excesses in love; I have told no lies; driven away no beggars; done no treachery; caused no tears. I have not stolen, nor murdered, nor ruined another, nor destroyed the laws of righteousness. . . ."² This done, his heart would be tested in the Balance of Justice, and, if it were of sufficient weight to swing up the symbol of Truth placed in the opposite scale, then the dead would have gained the great reward, *i.e.* identification with Osiris in his resurrection. In the resurrection of Osiris each worshipper saw a pledge of his own. Egyptian funeral rites were only a replica of the procedure which Isis had adopted in her resuscitation of the god. Osiris is addressed as "the Eldest Son, the Risen from the Dead."³ The dead are committed to his keeping with these words: "Osiris N. (*i.e.* the name of the dead person compounded with that of Osiris) hath

¹ *G.B.*, p. 383.

² *Book of the Dead*, cxxv. 14-32.

³ *Cf. Brace, Unknown God*, p. 21.

come (to Amenti=Hades) ; he seeth his father Osiris. It is he that loveth Osiris ; he hath made the journey.”¹
 “Protect Osiris N. in the region of the divine lower world ; grant that he conquer evil ; place thyself as protector between him and his sins.”²

The Osiris Myth bears, as we shall see, many striking resemblances to that of Dionysos.³ Both were gods of vegetation, sovereigns of an earthly kingdom ; both were killed and their bodies dismembered ; both were resuscitated by a goddess. This close similarity perhaps accounts for the Greeks’ ready acceptance of the worship of Serapis, which Ptolemy I., with a view to consolidating his kingdom, established at Alexandria. Serapis was a Græcized representation of Osiris, and his worship was solemnized in a Greek form of the old Osiris Egyptian liturgy. An enormous statue of Serapis, executed by the celebrated Athenian sculptor Bryaxis, was set up in the Serapium at Alexandria. The cult of the new god, which thus received both literary and artistic expression in Hellenic terms, quickly spread far beyond the limits of Egypt, until it became established in all the more important parts of the Empire.⁴

The worship of Isis shows even greater vitality. As the patroness of sailors, and as the embodiment of purity and maternal tenderness, she was worshipped contemporaneously with Serapis in the seaports of the eastern Mediterranean basin. Her mysteries, with their promise of happiness in a future life and freedom in this one, appear, by the commencement of our era,

¹ *Book of the Dead*, ix.

² *Ibid.*, xiv.

³ Herodotus derives the Greek belief in the soul’s immortality, which is presumed in the cults of Dionysos and Eleusis, from Egypt.

⁴ Cf. Cumont, *Les Religions Orientales*, pp. 99 ff.

among the most popular of the Empire. Bas-reliefs, funeral inscriptions, and the occurrence of proper names compounded with "Isis" ("Isotos," "Isidosus," etc.) evidence this popularity. "Isis," says Plutarch, "instituted these mysteries that they might serve as a lesson of piety and consolation for men and women who should suffer the same trials." ¹

The spirit which animated the cult of Isis shows singular resemblances to that of Christianity. The goddess was regarded as the supreme deity; and yet, such was her tender care for her initiates, that the humblest of them could address his prayers directly to her. "En adsum, tuis commota, Luci, precibus, rerum natura parens, elementorum omnium domina, sæculorum progenies initialis, summa numinum . . ." says the goddess to the hero of Apuleius' story. The followers of Isis were a holy army who voluntarily submitted to her "yoke of service," and who in this service experienced perfect freedom. The priest of Isis speaks thus to Lucius, who had regained his human form: ". . . Cum cœperis deæ servire, tunc magis senties fructum tuæ libertatis." The words of Jesus, "'Take my yoke upon you . . . for my yoke is easy and my burden is light'" (Matt. xi. 29, 30), would have sounded with a familiar ring in the ears of an initiate of Isis. "We need not wonder," says Frazer, "that in a period of decadence when traditional faiths were shaken, when systems clashed, when men's minds were disquieted, when the fabric of empire itself, once deemed eternal, began to show ominous rents and fissures, the serene figure of Isis with her spiritual charm, her gracious promise of immortality, should have appeared to many like a star in a stormy sky, and

¹ *De Iside et Osiride*, xxviii.

should have roused in their breasts a rapture of devotion not unlike that which was paid in the Middle Ages to the Virgin Mary. Indeed, her stately ritual, with its shaven and tonsured priests, its matins and vespers, its tinkling music, its baptism and aspersions of holy water, its solemn processions, its jewelled images of the Mother of God, presented many points of similarity to the pomps and ceremonies of Catholicism. The resemblance need not be purely accidental. Ancient Egypt may have contributed its share to the gorgeous symbolism of the Catholic Church as well as to the pale abstractions of her theology. Certainly in art, the figure of Isis suckling the infant Horus is so like that of the Madonna and child, that it has sometimes received the adoration of ignorant Christians.”¹

We must now consider a type of religion which prevailed in Syria, Cyprus, and Asia Minor with substantially the same myth and ritual. A goddess of fertility, with whom is associated a lover, is worshipped as the giver of the earth's increase. The presence of this deity is essential to the world for the process of reproduction, whether among animals or plants. Winter is caused by the absence of this goddess of fertility, who has departed to seek her Lover in the Nether World. The appearance of Spring is Earth's response to their return. Moreover, according to the principles of sympathetic magic, sexual union was regarded as a method of assisting the deity in her office, and consequently such union and its symbols played a considerable part in the ritual and worship of this type of religion.

¹ *G.B.*, p. 383.

Ishtar and Tammuz.

The myth of Ishtar and Tammuz is based upon the beliefs of Babylonian nature-worship. Tammuz was the darling of Ishtar, the great goddess of life and love. Every autumn Tammuz was believed to pass into the underworld, and thither his divine lover, distracted by his absence, departed in quest of him. Each year she descends

“ To the land of no return, to the far-off, to regions of corruption,

Ishtar, the daughter of the Moon-god, her mind set ;

To the house whose entrance is without exit,

To the road whose way is without return,

To the house whose entrance is bereft of light ;

A place where much dust is their food, their meat mud,

Where light is never seen, where they dwell in darkness ;

Ghosts, like birds, whirl round the vaults,

Over the doors and wainscoting there lieth thick dust.”¹

This departure from the earth of the divinity of life and love brings infertility to the whole kingdom of vegetation and of animals. The inevitable cessation of all existence which thus threatens is only averted by the dispatch of an envoy from the god Ea bearing a peremptory message to allow Ishtar to return. At last Ishtar comes back in company with her beloved Tammuz, and the earth, possessed of love once more, re-blossoms into spring.

In addition to the practice of ritualistic prostitution, prominent features of this worship were human sacrifice, the mourning for the death of Tammuz, and the celebration of his return from the dead. It is to the

¹ Budge, *Babylonian Life*, p. 140.

rites of this cult that the prophet Ezekiel refers as figuring among the evils that had made Yahweh "go far away from his sanctuary": "Then he brought me to the door of the gate of Yahweh's house which is toward the north; and, behold, there sat the women weeping for Tammuz." (Ezek. viii. 14). Ishtar, known as "Attar" in Mesopotamia, and as "Astarte" or "Astoreth" in Canaan, is the goddess whom Jeremiah speaks of as "the queen of heaven" (vii. 18; xlv. 17-19, 25). She was identified with the star Sirius, and the star Venus, and with the constellation Virgo. This transformation of an agrarian goddess into an astral divinity was part of a general movement which began under Chaldean influence, and eventually, as we shall see, profoundly affected the religions of paganism.

Aphrodite and Adonis.

A very similar ritual and myth, in which Ishtar and Tammuz are replaced by Aphrodite and Adonis, appear further westward. Paphos in Cyprus was one of the most famous centres of the cult. It was brought there, according to Herodotus, by Phœnician colonists from Askalon.

This myth relates how Aphrodite delivered a chest into the keeping of Proserpine, queen of the underworld. In this chest she had concealed the infant Adonis, who had been born from a myrrh tree. Proserpine, on opening the chest, is so enraptured with the beauty of the child that she refuses to part with him. Aphrodite, like Ishtar, descends to Hades—with the same direful result to the earth's fruitfulness. She demands her Adonis, and a quarrel ensues. Zeus eventually settles the dispute by deciding that Adonis

shall abide in the nether-world for one part of the year and in the upper-world for the other part.

As in the case of Tammuz, the death of Adonis was annually mourned. Funeral processions, bearing images of the god dressed as a corpse, proceeded, amid the mournful notes of the flute and the wailing of women, to the sea, wherein the "body" was cast. A deep lamentation followed, in which, however, could be heard utterances of the expectation that the lost one would soon return. And indeed the next day Adonis was believed to come to life again.

Sir J. G. Frazer maintains that Adonis was regarded as a deity of vegetation ; and the ritual of the "gardens of Adonis" bears out this statement. In this ritual seeds were sown in shallow pots or plates and were made to sprout rapidly by means of artificial culture. After eight days these were taken, together with images of Adonis, and thrown away into the sea, or into a river or spring. This procedure was regarded as a means of promoting the growth of vegetation. It is still practised with this end in view by certain European peasants and by Bengalese and Hindoo tribes. The fact that the Christian Church has taken over these pagan practices is even to-day evidenced in Sicily, where at Easter time such "gardens" are placed on the graves of the dead, together with images of the crucified Christ which have been made by the Greek and Latin Churches on Good Friday.

Cybele and Attis.

In Phrygia the rites of Cybele and Attis replace those of the Babylonian Ishtar and Tammuz, or the Greek Aphrodite and Adonis. This cult was officially

introduced into Rome during the second Punic War, 205 years before our era, owing, as Cumont says, to "*une circonstance fortuite.*" On the advice of the Sibylline books the black conical stone, which embodied the divinity of Cybele, was brought from her centre of worship at Pessinus in the interior of Asia Minor to the Latin capital, for the purpose of driving the enemy from Italy. The desired result followed its arrival, for within a few months Hannibal and his army set sail for Africa. As a token of thankfulness, a temple to the "Great Mother" was erected on the Palatine Hill, and annual games, *ludi megalenses*, were instituted to commemorate the coming of the goddess and the dedication of her sanctuary. This was the first oriental religion to reach Rome. "The vanguard of the conquerors (the Oriental Religions) had already encamped in the heart of Italy, before the rearguard of the beaten army (the Carthaginians) fell sullenly back from its shores."¹

The Roman Senate soon discovered that the violent fanaticism of the new cult which they had imported contrasted unfavourably with the calm and reserved dignity of the State worship, and they deemed it wise to prevent contamination with its sacred orgies by forbidding any citizen to take part in them or to enter Cybele's priesthood. Not until the time of Claudius was this ban removed. The nature of the rites of this Phrygian goddess's cult easily explains the repugnance which the Romans felt towards it. These rites, which during the first two centuries of their celebration at Rome were entirely in the hands of Asiatics, fellow-countrymen of the goddess, were as follows: On the 15th of March the High Priest of

¹ *G.B.*, p. 348.

Cybele, a eunuch—as were all her priests—went in solemn procession with *cannophori* to the banks of the Almon, a tributary of the Tiber. There by the river's brink the sacrifice of a six-year-old bull took place. Fresh reeds were then cut and carried by the *cannophori* to the temple on the Palatine Hill.¹ Seven days later a pine tree was ceremoniously felled, swathed in mourning bands like a corpse, and brought with wreaths of violets suspended from its branches to the goddess's sanctuary. The most distinctive and frightful features of Cybele's ritual took place on 24th March—the *dies sanguinis*. The day appears to have begun by the performance of a great official taurobolium, or baptism of bull's blood. The high priest descended into a pit or grave covered by a grating. Upon the latter a bull was slaughtered so that the animal's smoking blood poured through the grating upon the man beneath till he was entirely covered by it. The origin of such a revolting ceremony goes back to the distant past, when perhaps the high priest of this nature-deity was annually slain in the character of the god, and a new representative took his place, as a means of ensuring the revival of vegetation. Even if this is so, its significance as a piece of nature magic must have been forgotten long before the time we are considering. The taurobolium was probably regarded as a rite which conferred the higher, the divine life.² Cumont considers³ that it was only introduced into the Attis cult as a

¹ This ceremony probably originated as a primitive phallic procession.

² "Ein Begraben des Menschen und Auferstehen eines Gottes, nicht Sünneritus, sondern wirkliche Wiedergeburt, ursprünglich entsprechend einem Gemeindefest, in welchem der Oberpriester für den Gott eintrat, und gefeiert als stellvertretendes Opfer für andere." (*H.M.R.*, pp. 32, 33.)

³ *Les religions orientales*, p. 81.

result of its contact with Mithraism in the second century, since the first public taurobolium of which we have record is the one which was performed on behalf of the Emperor. But, as Loisy points out, the rite is in its nature one of initiation, and would therefore be essentially secret. Moreover, till the time of Claudius, the cult of Magna Mater was confined to Asiatics, so that there is little likelihood of our having any record of a taurobolium before the official one on behalf of the Emperor was instituted.¹ After the taurobolium, the next item of what must have been a strenuous day's programme was the climax of the mourning for Attis, which had begun when his pine tree had been cut two days before. The priests and candidates for initiation gathered round the sacred stone of the goddess and the "corpse" of her youthful lover, and *le tapage du deuil* began. Led by the Archigallus, the mourners proceeded to work themselves up to a pitch of frenzy, cutting themselves with knives and bespattering the sacred stone with blood, while they executed a wild orgiastic dance to the sound of flutes, drums, cymbals, and tambourines. At last the neophytes, inflamed almost to madness, entirely insensible to pain, proved their sympathy and unity with the dead Attis by sacrificing their virility, even as his had been sacrificed. It appears that a *geschlechtliche Vereinigung* between these initiates and the goddess took place that same night. This was regarded as completing their identification with the god. On 25th March, after a day of rest, the resurrection of Attis was celebrated. This is apparently the ritual referred to by Firmicus Maternus : ² "A light shines upon the

¹ Cf. *Les Mystères Païens*, pp. 116-119.

² *De Err. Prof. Relig.*, 22.

mourners in the temple. The tomb is opened. The priest appears, and, touching the lips of the sorrowing weepers with oil, announces that the god is risen and that they too may hope for a like salvation from evil.”¹ A general saturnalia followed, and the festival closed on the 27th of March with a procession to the river, where the high priest washed the image and sacred implements, which were then ceremoniously carried back again to the temple.

The myth that is related to explain the extraordinary ritual of this cult shows considerable variations, which, though interesting, it is somewhat beside our purpose to discuss. Attis, like Tammuz or Adonis, was a youth beloved of the goddess of fertility, and the legend represents him as, either voluntarily or involuntarily, castrating himself. The motive which prompted such ritual was certainly not ascetic. An idea of this kind was quite alien to the age in which the rites arose. Sir William Ramsay remarks on the parallel between Attis and the drone-bee, who, in intercourse with the queen-bee, is robbed of the organism concerned, even as in one version of the Attis myth the same fate overtakes the god. The parallel is interesting, in view of the fact that the mother-goddess Cybele was worshipped at Ephesus under the form of a queen-bee. But it is doubtful if the Phrygians’ progress in entomology had reached a knowledge of the physiological fact involved. It is clear that the prestige of the priesthood would be interested in the continuance of the rite, which was a *sine qua non* of admission to the sacerdotal office.

¹ The priest’s words are—

θαρρεῖτε μύσται τοῦ θεοῦ σεσωμένου
ἔσται γὰρ ὑμῖν ἐκ πόνων σωτηρία.

That Attis was originally a god of vegetation is indicated by the pine-tree ritual, to which the May-Day ceremonies performed in some parts of Europe even to the present bear a striking resemblance. The maypole celebrations in England are a relic of this old custom. The object of such practices was initially to bring back the spirit of Spring. One of the epithets of Attis is "very fruitful"; and his death (the cutting of the pine), his burial, and his resurrection may be regarded as a symbolical representation in human terms of the reaping of the harvest, the sowing of the seed, and its growth in the spring. Cybele was likewise a goddess of fertility. This explains the gift of the membrum virile. The final bathing of her image in the river perhaps originated as a rain charm to ensure sufficient moisture for the coming season. Ramsay, speaking of the "Great Mother Cybele," called "Artemis" in Lydo-Phrygian cults, and "Leto" and "Anaitis" by Persian colonists, says: "The vast temple near Ephesus and the tiny terra-cotta shrine (*cf.* Acts xix) were equally acceptable to her according to the means of the votary. She dwelt in neither. She was implicit in the life of nature; the reproductive power that kept the great world ever the same amid the constant flux of things. Mother of all and nurse of all, she was most really present wherever the unrestrained life of nature was most purely manifested, in the woods, mountains, and wild beasts."

The cult of Cybele and Attis possessed the advantage of official recognition in Rome. As a result, other somewhat similar Asiatic sects were prompted to place themselves under the ægis of Attis-worship. These, in return for the safety which the Phrygian

cult afforded, helped to swell the number of its worshippers and, by a process of syncretism, to broaden its doctrines and modify its ritual. It is not unlikely that one such sect was that of Esmun, a Phœnician nature deity.¹ Esmun's rites were specially popular at Sidon and Carthage. He was a source of "help" and "grace," and a "healer" whose worship shows moral advance upon that of Attis. Count Baudissin even regards the Esmun cult as exerting an ethical influence upon Yahweh-worship.

The crude nature of the Attis rites seems to have disgusted the Greeks, but it provoked less repugnance among the unæsthetic Romans. The taurobolium, as an initiatory ceremony of rebirth, was always attractive, and was capable of becoming a vehicle of high ethical value. By the end of the first century of our era it was the outstanding feature of Attis-worship in the Roman world. The initiates also celebrated a sacred meal, which is mentioned both by Clement of Alexandria and by Firmicus Maternus.² The celebrant at this sacramental repast ate from the drum and drank from the cymbal, and then, as "one about to die" (*homo moriturus*), was admitted to the inner parts of the temple. The tambourine and the cymbal were the instruments used by Cybele's priests. The meaning of *homo moriturus* would seem to be that the initiate was about to die to the old life and to be born

¹ Cf. *Attis und Esmun*, Baudissin.

² Clement of Alexandria says that the initiates' password was ἐκ τυμπάνου ἔφαγον, ἐκ κυμβάλου ἔπιον, ἐκερνοφόρησα, ὑπο τὸν παστὸν ὑπέδυν.

Protrept, ii. 15.

and Firmicus Maternus, referring to the same rites, states: In quodam templo, ut interioribus partibus homo moriturus possit admitti, dicit: "de tympano manducavi de cymbalo bibi et relegendis secreta perdidici," quod græco sermone dicitur:—ἐκ τυμπάνου βέβωκα, ἐκ κυμβάλου πέπωκα, γέγονα μύστης Ἀττεως,

de Err., xviii.

again;¹ and the "inner parts" of the temple refer to the chamber, the *θαλάμη*, where the symbolic union with the goddess took place. Firmicus Maternus, in the same passage, goes on to speak of the repast in a manner which clearly shows that he regarded it as a parallel to the Christian eucharist. We have already discussed the different significances which were attached to sacramental meals in primitive times. Of the particular influence which the meals of the Mystery Religions had upon Christian usages we shall have to speak later. But two other interesting facts which suggest parallels between Christianity and the cult of Cybele and Attis may be noticed here: (i) The Christian "Palm Sunday" forms, with "Good Friday" and "Easter," a group of sacred days, which was already commemorated before our era in the "Canna Intrat," "Dies Sanguinis," and "Hilaria," of Attis-worship. (ii) It was Ephesus, the chief centre of adoration of the "Great Mother," which was the first city in Christendom to evidence the need for Mariolatry.

¹ The expression *renatus in æternum* occurs in inscriptions referring to the taurobolium; but none of those extant are older than the fourth century A.D. The idea of rebirth seems to have been common to all the mysteries. Lucius is told that initiation (into the priesthood of Isis) is like a "voluntary death," and that the goddess is able to make initiates "new born". (Apuleius, *Metaph.*, xi. 21).

CHAPTER X

GREEK MYSTERY RELIGIONS : THE WORSHIP OF DIONYSOS ;
ORPHISM ; THE ELEUSINIAN MYSTERIES

Dionysos.

IN the history of the cult of Dionysos, which was reformed in Orphism, and further spiritualized by Pythagoras, we have an interesting example of the manner in which a primitive, savage worship can develop into a highly moral and ethical religion.

Dionysos was a Thracian nature god, uncontrolled, forceful, and boisterous as Nature herself appeared to be to the rude Thracians. M. Foucart, in *Le Culte de Dionysos en Attique* (p. 22 f.), describes the worshippers' conception of their god in the following terms : " A voir les ruisseaux se précipiter en cascades écumeuses et bruyantes, à entendre le mugissement des taureaux qui paissent sur les hauts plateaux et les bruits étranges de la forêt battue par le vent, les Thraces s'imaginèrent reconnaître la voix et les appels du maître de cet empire (Dionysos) ; ils se figurèrent un dieu qui se plaisait, lui aussi, aux bonds désordonnés et aux courses folles à travers la montagne boisée. La religion s'inspira de cette conception ; le plus sûr moyen pour les mortels de gagner les bonnes grâces de la divinité, c'est de l'imiter, et, dans la mesure du possible, de conformer leur vie à la sienne. Aussi, les Thraces s'efforcèrent-ils d'atteindre ce délire divin qui transportait leur Dionysos, et ils

crurent y parvenir en suivant leur maître, invisible et présent, dans ses courses sur la montagne.”

The main feature of this religion was accordingly the cultivation of a wild enthusiasm and a spirit of abandon, as a preparatory means for becoming *ἐνθεος*; and such *ἐνθεοι* were so far identified with the god as to be called by his name, *Βάκχοι*. “Here, if anywhere, in the Greek peoples’ worship, we may find traces of that fervour and self-abandonment which, in our religious vocabulary, is called ‘faith.’”¹

The date of the introduction of this cult into Greece was very early—Homer shows some slight knowledge of it—and eventually the worship of Dionysos was officially united with that of Apollo at Delphi. As a god of fertility, and particularly of trees, and later specially of the vine, his emblems were the ivy, the grape cluster, the bull, the goat, and the phallos. The most characteristic rite in the worship of Dionysos was a savage sacramental act called the “*Omophagia*,” or eating of raw flesh. In this rite a bull, no doubt regarded as an incarnation of the deity, was devoured alive, or, as Professor Robertson Smith suggests, was devoured raw. The object of this haste was, as we have seen in our survey of primitive religion (Chapter III), that the “mana” or divine energy within the living animal might pass into the eater, who thus attained communion with his god. This was not done in earliest times with a view to the worshipper’s own benefit. Such individualism in religion is a comparatively late growth. These followers of Dionysos, who became *ἐνθεοι*, passed through the experience for the purpose of charging themselves with the supernatural energy of the god of fertility in order that

¹ Farnell, *Cults of Greek States*, vol. v. chap. iv.

they might perform the rites of vegetation magic for the benefit of the community. The same underlying idea of assisting the god of vegetation in the discharge of his functions appears in other minor ceremonies in connection with this nature cult. For instance, (1) the hanging of images, or masks of the god, on trees in order to ensure fruitfulness or to drive off evil spirits; (2) the carrying of lighted torches to induce the sun's warmth; (3) the display of phalli to encourage abundance; (4) at Athens, for the purpose of promoting fertility, the sacred marriage of the queen with an image of Dionysos was annually celebrated, a figure of the god being carried to the king's residence (the cattle-stall, *βουκόλιον*).¹

The Dionysos cult, based—as it was—on an identification of the god with dying and reviving vegetation, naturally fostered a belief in immortality. But not until the god was regarded as separate from, and as transcending the revelation of himself in nature, instead of being merely incarnate in animals and plants, would his own distinct and personal immortality be conceived. In the development of the ceremony of the “Liknophoria,” or offering of the first-fruits, we can see this conception receiving definite expression. In the Orphic cult the Liknophoria is mysticized, and involves the birth, not merely of first-fruits but of the infant Dionysos. Once this advance had been made, the belief in a happy immortality for his worshippers through union with himself would quickly follow. It had doubtless taken place centuries before Plutarch wrote to comfort his wife, on the death of their little daughter, by

¹ Aristotle says of this: *ἔτι καὶ νῦν γὰρ τῆς τοῦ βασιλέως γυναικὸς ἡ τύμμιξις ἑνταυθα γίνεται τῷ Διονύσῳ καὶ ὁ γάμος.* (*Ath. Pol.*, iii).

reminding her of the immortality of the soul "as taught by tradition, and revealed in the mysteries of Dionysos."

Dionysos-worship was a religion of enthusiasm and emotion, as distinguished from a "morality" religion like that of Judaism or Zoroastrianism. "Dionysos does not constrain women to be chaste," says the prophet Pentheus in Euripides' *Bakchai*. Plutarch's picture of the unrestrained frenzy of the Thyiades or Bacchantes of Delphi illustrates the kind of excesses to which such a religion might easily lead.¹ According to Livy,² in 186 B.C. the nocturnal celebrations of the Bacchic rites became so scandalous that the initiates were imprisoned and, in some cases, put to death by the Senate. This, however, was done in the interests of morality. The rites were not absolutely forbidden to those who looked upon their celebration as a matter of conscience.

In one respect the cult of Dionysos has placed civilization under a debt, namely in its development of the drama and of music. By the fourth century B.C., τεχνίται Διονύσιου, private organizations of dramatic performers, arose. They became "a real political force, courted by kings and free states, and protected and favoured by the Roman Empire. They claimed a sacrosanct character as being ministers of Dionysos, and the Delphic Oracle championed their claim. . . . They were one of the forces that sustained a slowly sinking religion. No doubt their religious value was less significant, yet it should not be ignored."³ Xenophon, for instance, shows that educated Greeks preferred after dinner to watch the acting of a myth

¹ *De Mulierum Virt.*, xiii.

² xxxix. 8 ff. *et al.*

³ Farnell, *Cults of Greek States*, vol. v. chap. iv.

rather than the revolutions of a dancing girl. Thus, through these dramatic guilds, Dionysos became, along with Apollo, the god of Greek intellectual life.

Orphism.

Orpheus was, according to legend, a priest of the Dionysos cult who was torn in pieces by raving bacchantes (*Maivádes*). Perhaps this story is a reminiscence of the time when the priest of Dionysos, and not a bull, suffered death as the representative of the god, and provided the "omophagia"; on the other hand, the legend may be the echo of a struggle which once existed between the two cults.

Orphism imparted to Dionysos-worship a deep moral and spiritual significance. It developed its beliefs and reformed its practice. For instance, it laid hold of the idea of spiritual possession of men by the deity, but it taught that identification with God was not to be attained by crude, artificially stimulated, emotional ecstasy, but by abstinence and rules of purification.

The Orphics' doctrine of original sin and of redemption was based upon the Dionysos-Zagreus myth. In this story the infant Dionysos, the offspring of Proserpine, or of Demeter, is treacherously done to death by the Titans, who tear him limb from limb and devour all but his heart. This Zeus secures, and gives a potion made therefrom to Semele, by whom, as a result, Dionysos is born again. The Titans are blasted by Zeus, but from their ashes arises the race of men. Mankind thus inherits a spark of the divine nature because their ancestors, the Titans, had eaten the flesh of Dionysos-Zagreus. According to Orphism,

man's hope of salvation consisted in freeing this divine element within him from the lower perishable Titanic element. The process was to be effected by ascetic practices and by initiation. As long as these were neglected a man would continue to undergo a series of rebirths in human or in animal form. The initiatory ceremony was the omophagia of the Dionysos cult. Thus, although the followers of Orpheus were vegetarians, due to their belief in the transmigration of the souls of the dead into the bodies of animals, they not only retained the omophagia, but gave it a most prominent place in their ritual. Probably it was too firmly established to suppress. It has been surmised that the password of the Orphic initiates, "A kid, I have fallen into the milk," may refer, in cryptic language, to this rite, as accomplishing the regeneration of the mystic who thereby became a kid (*i.e.* the incarnation of Dionysos), and was thus born again¹ into a blessed life of immortality and escaped the circle of rebirth (κύκλος γενέσεως).

Orphic doctrine on the subject of eschatology was elaborate. It taught that the soul of the dead was led from the world by Hermes, who imparted to it careful instructions concerning the route to Hades. There it would experience a judgment. Punishment took the form of reincarnation. But the accepted initiate thenceforth enjoyed complete union with his god, Dionysos, a union which had proleptically begun on the day of his first omophagia on earth.

In later times the beliefs of these Orphic religious brotherhoods degenerated into semi-magical rites, performed often on behalf of the dead to liberate them from the doom of rebirth. It was perhaps a

¹ Cf. pp. 121, 122.

similar motive which led the Corinthian Christians to be "baptised for the dead" (1 Cor. xv. 29). Plutarch (*De Superstit.*, xii) deprecates this Orphic emphasis on "incantations, wavings, enchantments, and magic." "The weakness of the Orphic," says Miss Harrison,¹ "was that he could not say, 'This daubing with white clay, this eating of raw bulls, is savage nonsense; give it up.' The strength of Orphism was that it said, 'This daubing, this eating, is not sufficient in itself; it must be followed by an arduous endeavour after holiness.'"

It is undeniable that Orphism, in its emphasis upon the eternal nature of the soul, upon purity, and upon identification with the deity, exercised a great influence on Græco-Roman religion, and prepared it in no little measure to receive those sublimer truths which were embodied in Judaism, in the Oriental Mystery Religions, and in Christianity.

Eleusinian Mysteries.

The remarkable feature of the Eleusinian Mysteries was their official adoption as a State religion by Athens. This has been ascribed to the "wave of religious enthusiasm" which made Athens break down the old principles of birthright and citizenship as the qualifications for admission to the worship of the State gods.² This religious revival of the sixth century set men craving for some assurance of a happy after-life. The Athenians in their search had recourse to those rites which, from time immemorial, had been enacted at Eleusis. These rites were originally those of the "Old Corn Mother" who bestowed, year by year, the

¹ *Proleg. to Study of Greek Religion*, p. 495.

² Cf. Jevons, *Introd. to Hist. of Religion*, chap. xxiv.

blessing of the harvests of waving grain, for which the fertile plains of Eleusis were so celebrated. They were no doubt in their beginnings simple and public ; but they tended more and more to be kept secret whenever the country was overrun by foreigners ; and thus, in the eyes of the Athenians, they became surrounded by a halo of mystery. Within this mystery, it might well have been thought, lay the means of assuring happiness in the next world.

The Homeric hymn to Demeter, a writing of the seventh century, represents an adaptation, or rather a transformation, of these rustic rites of the Eleusinian Corn-goddess into a Greek "mystery," in which Greek divinities are the principals, and which offers a blessed immortality. The main features of the myth which the hymn describes are as follows: The maiden Proserpine is snatched away by Pluto, the king of the Underworld, as she is gathering flowers in a meadow. Her mother, Demeter, disguising her quality of Corn-goddess, seeks everywhere for her lost child. In her grief she refuses to allow the earth to yield its increase, so that even the erstwhile fertile Rarian plain lay bare and fallow to the eyes of the Eleusinian farmers. At last Zeus, perceiving that the gods were in danger of being deprived of their wonted sacrifices if men were thus allowed to perish from hunger, ordered Pluto to return the Corn-maiden, now queen of the Underworld, to her mother for eight months of the year. Demeter, in joy at thus receiving back her daughter, straightway restores the earth's fruitfulness, and thenceforward the season of spring is Nature's recognition that Proserpine has ascended from Hades, "a great marvel to gods and mortal men." Demeter finally calls the princes of Eleusis to her side, and, show-

ing them their fields white to harvest, reveals her sacred mysteries. "Blessed," adds the poet, "is the mortal man who has seen these things; but he that is uninitiated and hath no share in them hath never equal lot in death between the murky gloom." ¹

The ritual of the Eleusinian Mysteries corresponds to this myth. But in its dramatic form of expression, and in its introduction of Iacchos (*i.e.* Dionysos), it shows syncretism with the Dionysos cult. The latter thus established its influence at Eleusis as it had at Delphi. Minor rites of a preparatory and purificatory nature were celebrated at Athens in February and March, and sometimes immediately before the major mysteries at Eleusis. The latter, which took place in September and October, began by carrying to Athens the sacred objects which were guarded by the Hierophant in the temple at Eleusis. A solemn proclamation was then made to intending candidates, warning them lest anyone should dare to receive initiation "whose hands were not clean and whose tongue was not prudent." That this ban was something more than a mere form is shown by the fact that Nero was deterred by it, and that Apollonius of Tyana was excluded by the Hierophant from initiation because he was "impure in respect to τὰ δαιμόνια and practised magical arts." The ban was doubtless based upon both ritualistic incapacity and moral unworthiness. A mystagogue, who must be a member of one of the two priestly families at Eleusis (Eumolpides, or Kerykes), then instructed each candidate in the meaning of the mystery. Fasting and abstinence were required and confession was urged. The mystics were baptized in the sea, and the next day each sacrificed a sucking-pig, which was afterwards

¹ *Hymn to Demeter*, 480-483, Lang's translation.

eaten at a sacred meal. Two days later, at sunrise, the procession of candidates set out from Athens for Eleusis, with songs and dances, bearing lighted torches in their hands, and accompanied by their sacred images, including that of Iacchos. They reached Eleusis at night and entered the holy precincts. What followed there is largely a matter of conjecture. Clement of Alexandria (*Protr.*, ii. 21), and Arnobius (v. 26) give us what appears to have been the password of an initiate of the Eleusinian Mysteries: "I have fasted; I have drunk the kukeon; I have taken (something) in the box; having done what was required, I have placed it in the basket, then (I have replaced it) from the basket into the box."¹ The "fasting" lasted for three days, during which the candidates drank nothing but the mystic *κυκέων*—a mixture of flour, water, and mint—and ate nothing but sacred cakes. It corresponds to the fast of Demeter, who, according to the myth, refused food while searching for the lost child (*Hymn Dem.*, 206–211). The mysterious emblems which were ceremoniously handled were probably of a phallic nature, and, with the *κυκέων*, were regarded in the original Eleusinian corn rite as charms for assuring fertility.

It has been thought that the teaching given at Eleusis was of an entirely dramatic character, that no words were spoken, but that scenes from the life-story of the goddesses were enacted. "The intention," says Dr. Kennedy,² "was probably to create an over-

¹ Cf. the prayer of Psyche to Ceres (Demeter): "I pray thee . . . by the joyful ceremonies of harvest, by the secrets of thy baskets . . . by the dark descent to the unilluminated marriage of Proserpine . . . and by the other secrets which are concealed within the temple of Eleusis" (Apuleius, *Metam.*, vi. 2).

² *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions*, p. 112.

whelming impression more than to impart esoteric doctrines." Excavations at Eleusis have shown that the production of such an impression could have received little assistance from any elaborate stage machinery. Moreover, that some words were spoken, seems to be implied by Galen, who bids his pupils listen to his teaching on the natural sciences as carefully as if they were initiates at the Eleusinian or Samothracian Mysteries listening to the Hierophant.

The crowning scene at Eleusis was the ἐποπτεία. It was probably only revealed to initiates of a special rank. It began with a sacred marriage between the Hierophant and the priestess of Demeter. Bishop Sovrites Asterius, in his *Encomium on the Blessed Martyrs*, makes a violent attack on paganism, in the course of which he says, "Are not the Mysteries at Eleusis the chief act of your worship? . . . Is not there performed the descent into darkness, the venerated congress of the Hierophant and the Priestess, of him alone with her alone? Are not the torches extinguished and does not the vast and countless assemblage believe that their salvation is in what is done by the two in darkness?" The Bishop's facts may be accepted. The marriage was no doubt originally part of the Eleusinian corn-magic ritual. But the Greeks gave it a deeper significance. In darkness and silence the initiates waited while the mystic congress was symbolically performed. Suddenly, amid a blaze of light, the Hierophant appeared, and displayed a freshly cut ear of corn, emblematic of the new-found daughter of Demeter the Corn-mother, saying, as he did so, "Queen Bromo has brought forth the sacred boy Bromos." "Bromos" appears to have been a name of Dionysos, whose cult is here superimposed upon the underlying corn-magic

ritual. "Probably," says Miss Harrison, "the human birth was but the anthropomorphic form of the first (corn-ear) revelation, *i.e.* the Dionysos drama of the Lyknites, child, and fruit, is re-enacted at Eleusis."¹

It may be asked how this revelation brought hope of a happy after-life to those who beheld it. Possibly, as Frazer says, "the thought of seed buried in the earth readily suggested a comparison with human destiny. . . ."² But this thought is more applicable to a resurrection of the body, as St. Paul employs it in 1 Cor. xv. 29. The initiates of Eleusis never expected this. They already believed in universal existence in Hades after death ; but they were persuaded somehow that initiation would change that after-life from a shadowy, dreary existence into one of perfect happiness. Thus Plutarch writes, "When a man dies he is like unto those who are being initiated into the Mysteries. The one expression, *τελευτᾷ*—the other *τελεῖσθαι* correspond. . . . Our whole life is but a succession of wanderings, and of painful courses, of long journeys by tortuous ways without outlet. At the moment of quitting it, fears, terrors, quiverings, mortal sweats, and a lethargical stupor come over us and overwhelm us ; but as soon as we are out of it pure spots and meadows receive us, with voices and dances and the solemnities of sacred words and holy sights. It is then that man having become perfect and initiated—restored to liberty, really master of himself—celebrates, crowned with myrtle, the most august mysteries, holds converse with just and pure souls looking down upon the impure multitude of the profane or uninitiated, sinking in the mire and mist beneath him—through fear of death, and through disbelief in the life to come, abiding in

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 563.

² *G.B.*, p. 398.

its misery." "Thrice happy they who go to the world below having seen the Mysteries; to them alone is life there, to all others misery," says Sophocles;¹ and Pindar, Plato, Cicero, and others write to the same effect. There is thus no lack of evidence that initiation into the Mysteries was regarded as the means of securing a blessed life in Hades. The principles of suggestion explain how the existence of such a general belief could render initiation a source of happiness and confidence for the individual. The elaborate rites of the Eleusinian Mysteries, continuing for many days and culminating in the ritual marriage and birth, which symbolized union with the deity, produced an emotional result which was more potent in its effect than any process of intellectual argument or reasoned explanation could have been. For "efficacy," *i.e.* that which *does* things, has its source, not in the intellect, but in the emotions. Impulse so generated may be directed and conserved by intellectual processes; but the whole history of religion shows that emotion is able subjectively to accomplish desired ends quite unassisted by, and even in direct antagonism to, the promptings of reason.

¹ *Frag.*, 719.

CHAPTER XI

ASTROLOGY

THE worship of the heavenly bodies figured among the earliest forms of religious expression. We have noticed, in discussing the relations between Religion and Magic (p. 16), how the "unideated discharges of social energy," adopted, often, merely as a means of relieving overloaded feelings, provided the raw material of religion. An instinct, akin to that which prompts a dog to bay at the moon, perhaps impelled primitive man to work off energy on the celestial bodies in an equally irrelevant manner. When, however, mankind began to ponder over, and to give reasons for, such unpremeditated instinctive actions, the latter would become transformed into the crude beginnings of an astral worship.

The unearthing of Tutankhamen's tomb has revived recently the memories of those interesting discoveries, which were made at Tel-el-Amana towards the close of the nineteenth century, relating to the reign of this monarch's father-in-law, Akhenaton. The Tel-el-Amana excavations revealed the fact that this Pharaoh established in Egypt, though only for a few years, the monotheistic worship of the Sun's disc. This was nearly 3400 years ago; yet the extent to which this religion had then developed is disclosed in the king's prayer to the Sun: "Thou art in my heart, no other knows thee but thy son Akhenaton. Thou

hast initiated him into thy thoughts and into thy power."

Thus, some fourteen centuries before our era we have evidence that the worship of the heavenly bodies was already old. Consequently, it is not surprising that when, nearly 700 years later, men began to observe the motion of the stars with something approaching scientific accuracy, this accustomed religious conception of the objects of their study should retain its hold upon their minds.

The beginnings of what we may call "astronomy" date from the middle of the eighth century B.C., when the Chaldeans first arrived at an accurate method of measuring time. From then onwards, records of eclipses were made. Between 722 and 705 B.C., Nineveh replaced Babylon as the capital, but this change did not check the progress of astronomy. The ecliptic was fixed, the signs of the Zodiac were allotted to the four seasons, the five bright planets (Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn) were distinguished from the fixed stars, the motions and periodic times of each were discovered, and the lunar "month" was computed at slightly over twenty-nine and a half days. In 705 B.C. Babylon was restored to her former greatness, and the observation of the heavens was continued with assiduity and accuracy throughout the next 200 years, so that, before the beginning of the fifth century,¹ many of the fundamental astronomical facts had been discovered.

The proof of these basic astral phenomena by the Chaldeans gave a remarkable impetus to star-worship.

¹ So M. Cumont. Dr. Maurice Jastrow believes that the chief work was accomplished somewhat later, "after 400 B.C.," which would make it contemporary with the spread of astrological ideas towards the West (cf. *Ency. Brit.*, vol. ii. p. 797).

It is not difficult to picture how impressive the scene must have been, not only to the common people, but also to the priests themselves, when, in accordance with the prophecy which had been made from the temple precincts, the stated minute arrived and the moon began slowly to disappear before the eyes of the awestruck spectators. Such a power of foretelling the future seemed to banish arbitrariness and uncertainty from the universe. The gods themselves were found to be subject to fixed laws, and these laws had been revealed to the Chaldeans. Well might the Babylonians have been persuaded that, just as the discovery of the destiny which ruled the lives of these astral divinities had resulted from a careful watch upon the starry heavens, so the same scrutiny must disclose the fate of lesser beings upon earth. Indeed, might not all future happenings be read in the glittering vault of night? and, in apprehending the workings of the heavens, had not men reached the explanation of the actual law of life?

Upon such reasonings as these arose the beginnings of stellar divination and the idea of cosmic fatalism, which were destined to exert such an important influence upon the Hellenistic Mystery Religions at the dawn of the Christian era. For many decades this method of divination was applied only to the future of the nation, or to that of the king, as being the nation's representative. It might be thought that experience would soon have proved to the diviners the falsity of their theories. But astrology was in essence still a religion and not a science; faith, not reason, was its underlying foundation. Consequently, any incongruity between forecast and fulfilment was ascribed to some oversight in practice, and not to a

fundamental error in principle. The forecast would have been true, had not the conjunction or opposition of some planet, or the influence of some constellation been overlooked. Thus theory was superimposed upon theory, until by the beginning of our age there had grown up under the ægis of star-worship that curious complexity of astronomical signs and figures, of mystic numbers and hours, of spells, incantations, and magic rites, which has bequeathed to the word "astrology" such an evil significance.

Astronomical research among the Greeks was not far behind that in Babylon. In the sixth century B.C., Thales is said to have foretold an eclipse—probably that of 28th May 585 B.C. This makes it likely that he had either discovered, or heard about, the "saros" of the Chaldeans, *i.e.* the period of 223 lunations, after which the phases of the moon repeat themselves on the same day of the month. In the following century, the Greeks made considerable additions to their astronomical knowledge as the result of Babylonian influence. There are, however, certain fundamental differences between Greek and Chaldean astrology which deserve notice. In Hellas, the study of the heavens did not retain that sacerdotal character with which the Chaldeans continued to endow it.¹ To say this, is not to deny that the Greeks regarded the celestial luminaries as divine. Star-worship was, as we have remarked, one of the most primitive and universal of all religious beliefs. Such radical and primary conceptions of deity are not readily aban-

¹ "Fortunately for the Greeks they had no organised priesthood; untrammelled by prescription, traditional dogmas, or superstition, they could give their reasoning faculties full play. Thus they were able to create science as a living thing susceptible of development without limit."—Sir T. L. Heath, "Essay on Mathematics and Astronomy," *Legacy of Greece*, p. 104.

done. They continued in Greece. But there, after the sixth century B.C., astrology was pursued in a philosophical rather than in a religious spirit.

Some men, like Pythagoras (572-497 B.C.), and Anaxagoras (fl. 462-432 B.C.), regarded the sun and moon as material bodies.¹ It is true that the average Athenian of Socrates' time—as we learn from Plato's *Apology*—was shocked by such materialistic conceptions, and that men in general venerated the sun, moon, and stars, as deities, which were, in some way or other, often identified with their very human Olympians. But in Greece, up to the time of Alexander, the practice of divination by means of the stars, and the sense of fatalism which the observance of the unchangeable regularity in the motion of the astral bodies had produced among the Babylonians, did not arise.² It may have been that “the Greeks were critical enough to discover and utilize the serious element and to reject the rubbish.”³ That this “serious element” was held in high esteem is indicated by the story which is said to account for our “golden numbers.” According to this, the golden numbers were the cyphers by which Menton calculated the recurrence of eclipses. These so delighted the Athenians that they caused them to be inscribed in golden characters in the agora.

Greek philosophers were not slow to recognize in astral religion a valuable compromise between popular religious concepts and that theoretical monotheism which was indicated by pure reason. Plato regards

¹ Anaxagoras taught that the sun was a red hot mass of rock, and that the moon was a cold world like the earth.

² “The Greeks ever avoided star-worship, and were thus saved from the disease of astrology.” (Farnell, *Cults of the Greek States*).

³ Cumont, *Astrology and Religion*, p. 53.

the stars as "visible gods," animated by an ethereal soul akin to that of man. Aristotle recognized divine essences in the heavenly bodies. In the opinion of such philosophers, astral divinities were infinitely more sublime and worthy of human veneration than the popular gods of Olympus, or the sorry heroes of ridiculous and often indecent legends.

The conquests of Alexander gave a fresh impetus to sidereal religion in the West. This is to be ascribed to various causes.

1. The West was brought into closer touch with the East, where, by this time, star-worship was dominant.

2. The expanded geographical outlook and the discovery that men of even the distant Indies were, after all, very much like themselves, impressed the Greeks with the idea—which until now had hardly been more than a philosophical maxim—that a common humanity existed. This fostered a conception of the universality of the gods, and consequently tended to substantiate the divinity of the stars, which appeared alike to all men, whether they were seen from Spain or India.

3. The absolute rule of the sun, whose path through the constellations of the Zodiac was ever closely guarded by the five planets, seemed, according to astral religion, to place the stamp of divine approval upon the monarchical and despotic system of government. In the heavens men could discern a justification of autocracy; and the logical outcome of this line of thought is seen in the establishment of emperor-worship, culminating in the official foundation of the cult of "Sol Invictus," by Aurelian in 274 A.D.

4. In the third century B.C., Chaldeans—a term now applied to men versed in astrology, not merely to the inhabitants of Mesopotamia or to the Babylonian priesthood—began to missionize Greece. *Circa* 280 B.C., Berosos appeared in Cos. Greece herself showed more than a passive interest in these astrological doctrines. Men of learning went to study in Babylonia, and came back “Chaldeans.”

5. By far the most powerful factor in popularizing astral religion was the influence of the oriental Mystery cults, which, by the second century B.C., had begun to invade Hellenism. “In the Alexandrian age, astrology had permeated the whole of Semitic paganism.”¹ The Syrian Baals had added a sidereal to their agrarian aspect, and had become not merely “lords” of a few hill-locked glens, or even of a country, but universal, omnipotent, and eternal deities. But when the astrology of these Eastern religions began to spread through the Empire, it had already changed its nature since the time of the Chaldeans’ great discoveries in the “era of Nabonazzar,” five centuries before. “Mortal as I am,” the astronomer Ptolemy had exclaimed, “I know that I am born for a day; but when I follow the sacred multitude of the stars in their circular courses, my feet no longer touch the earth. I ascend to Zeus himself, and feast me on ambrosia.” Such astral mysticism and cosmic emotion have disappeared by the time the oriental mysteries advanced Westward. The message of astrology, as taught by the adepts of these exotic cults, is one of dread. In the forefront stands the incubus of a man’s inevitable fate as read in his horoscope, and with it the anxiety of discovering the propitious

¹ Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 81.

moment of action, together with the fear of courting "dis-aster," by neglecting to avail himself of the offices of the readers of the future. "Bientôt il n'y a plus d'affaire, grande ou petite, qu'on veuille entreprendre sans consulter l'astrologue. Non seulement on lui demande ses prévisions sur les événements publics considérables . . . en ne se rend plus au bain ou chez son coiffeur, on ne se change plus de vêtements, on ne se lime les ongles sans avoir attendu le moment propice."¹ From this oppressive "Sternenzwang" only magic ceremonies, and particularly initiation into the Mysteries, could bring freedom. Thus Lucius, after his initiation, addresses his prayer to Isis in these words: "Thou who dost undo the hopelessly ravelled threads of Fate, and dost alleviate the tempests of Fortune, and restrainest the hurtful courses of the stars"² Accordingly the oriental Mystery cults, by first emphasizing man's slavery to the *Ἀνάγκη* which caused the heavenly bodies to describe their unvarying orbits, and then providing a way of escape from fate through magic and mystery, each employed astral religion in the service of their particular god, and so spread the superstitious type of astrology among the majority of the people.

Among the more thoughtful minority star-worship was diffused by philosophers. In particular, Stoicism, which always made a point of synthesizing its doctrines with the teaching of prevailing cults, found, in the loftier aspect of astrology, many congenial

¹ Cumont, *Les religions orientales*, p. 200.

² And cf. the priest's address to Lucius on his transformation: "Let Fortune go and fume with Fury . . . for she hath no power against them who have devoted their lives to serve and honour the majesty of our goddess." (Apuleius, *Metam.*, xi. 15).

attributes, for example: the sense of unity and solidarity in the universe; the foolishness of anxiety and worry in the face of natural law; and the austerity which genuine astronomers affected as a means of avoiding the vices that weigh men down from ascending in mind to the starry divinities. The chief figure of this school in the two centuries preceding our era is Posidonius of Apamea (c. 135–51 B.C.), a great traveller and man of learning who combined to an extraordinary degree religious devotion with a love of philosophy. “He liberated the abstruse and formal astral-worship (of Chaldea and Persia) from the domain of the purely intellectual and wedded it to the highest emotions,” says Dr. Kennedy.¹ While this may not be strictly true, inasmuch as astrology in the East was never “purely intellectual” but always distinctly devotional, Posidonius certainly introduced a new emotional power into the Greeks’ outlook upon astrology, especially in the case of the more educated classes. “He made all human knowledge conspire to the building up of a great system, the coping of which was the enthusiastic adoration of the God who permeates the universal organism.”²

Thus, either through the influence of philosophers or of the oriental clergy, astrological ideas figured in the religious outlook of men all over the empire by the first century B.C. On the whole, this tended to a loftier and more monotheistic view of deity, for a sidereal God is *æternus* and “catholic.” And so it was that the Christians’ appellations, “Lord of Hosts” or “God Most High”—designations which they had appropriated from Judaism, did not sound

¹ *St. Paul and the Mystery Religions*, p. 6.

² Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

strange in the ears of the most barbaric Gentile converts.

But it is especially in its eschatological doctrines that astral religion has left its mark upon Christianity. Astrology taught that before birth the soul passed down to earth through seven realms, each ruled over by the sun or the moon or one of the five planets. From each realm the soul received some human characteristic. After death the approved soul retraced its journey through the seven "heavens," giving back at each the gift which had been lent to it, until at last only the divine essence remained to join the shining celestial Beings, among whom it would be blessed for ever in the enjoyment of knowledge and harmony and freedom from passion. St. Paul's reference to "the third heaven" (2 Cor. xii. 2) shows that the apostle was influenced by the conceptions of astral religion. He may have met with them either in the Mystery cults, or in Judaism, which had incorporated certain doctrines from Persian star-worship.¹ That we speak of Jesus' "ascension," and that the "next world" for Christians is "up" instead of "down" (as it was for the earlier Egyptians, Jews, and Greeks), or instead of being upon this earth renewed (as some of the later Jews expected), is to a considerable degree the result of the influence of star-worship. The Christian Church's choice of 25th December for Christ's birthday was directed, partly at least, by the same cause. This day is the *dies natalis* of the sun; the day when his meridian altitude begins once more to increase; a day which has been celebrated with pious rejoicings from time immemorial. In star-worship—for example, in Mithraism, which

¹ Cf. Reitzenstein, *H.M.R.*, pp. 64, 65.

was the result of imposing a sidereal cult upon the old dualism of Zoroaster—each day was regarded as sacred to one of the heavenly bodies: the Sun, Moon, Mars, Jupiter, Mercury, Venus, and Saturn. Our days of the week are still called after the luminary to which they were thus dedicated, though in four cases we must substitute the Teutonic name of the deity instead of the classical. In particular, the fact that Sunday, *dies Solis*, became the Christian Church's day of rest and worship, was certainly facilitated, if it were not originated, by the pagan observance of that day as sacred to the supreme deity.

It is now over sixty years ago since Archbishop Trench pointed out the linguistic remains that are to be found in our common speech, which prove how strong a hold astral beliefs once exercised upon the minds of men. "No one now believes in astrology, that the planet under which a man may happen to be born will affect his temperament, will make him for life of a disposition grave or gay, lively or severe. Yet we seem to affirm as much in language, for we speak of one as 'jovial,' or 'saturnine,' or 'mercurial.' . . . The same faith in the influence of the stars survives in the words 'disaster,' 'disastrous,' 'ill-starred,' 'ascendant,' 'ascendancy,' and indeed in 'influence' itself."¹ The interest in these proofs from language of the influence of astral religion lies, not least, in the examples which it provides of the continued use of terms long after they have totally lost their primary significance. A philologist of two thousand years hence might readily conclude from an examination of our present-day words that we were firm believers in the "coercion of the stars." But in

¹ *Study of Words*, p. 91.

how many cases has the inward meaning changed and only the outward form remains the same? If this is true of secular terminology still more is it true of religious. Rarely do words and expressions long continue to mean what logically they might be expected to mean. And the same inward change covered by outward fixity and stability is always and everywhere taking place in the case of rites as it is in the case of words. The omophagia among the Orphics meant something more spiritual than did the same rite in the Dionysos cult; the taurobolium in Mithraism had a higher significance than it had in the Phrygian cult of Attis. Both words and rites must be judged in the light of the whole circle of ideas of the people by whom they are used. The enforcement of a literal and original interpretation of the creeds of most religions would, in general, exclude all except fools and knaves from the community.

CHAPTER XII

MITHRAISM

THE history of Mithraism is of peculiar interest for two reasons. (1) Mithraism was the great rival of Christianity in its struggle for supremacy over the multifarious religions of the East. (2) Mithraism provides an exact parallel to Christianity in almost every respect. For example: (a) It sprang from an Eastern religion very much akin to Judaism. (b) It began to penetrate the Western empire contemporaneously with the spread of Christianity. Thus both encountered the same conditions—social, intellectual, and religious; and many of the striking similarities between the two rivals must be ascribed to the influence of this common environment. (c) Mithraism was never a national, but always remained a personal and “brotherhood” religion, like Christianity. Both emphasized the equality of high and low. Mithraic inscriptions frequently mention slaves as being initiates of higher grades than their masters.¹ (d) In both religions, the divine mediator between humanity and the Almighty practically becomes identified with the Supreme God. (e) The rites and doctrines of Mithraism contain remarkable correspondences with those of Christianity. (f) Its ethical teaching differentiates it from all the other mystery religions, and this is doubtless one reason why Mithra stood out from

¹ Cf. Cumont, *Mysteries of Mithra*, pp. 80, 81.

among the many deities competing for popular favour as the rival of Christ.

The origins of Mithraism go back to remote antiquity. Not a few primitive features survived in its rites and customs. For instance, the choice of subterranean places of worship appears to belong to a time when men were little more than cave-dwellers. The animal forms and customs adopted by various degrees of initiates reflect the crude belief in theriomorphic gods who could be "drawn on" in the same way as a man clothed himself with an animal's skin. The slaughter of the wild bull, whose blood renewed the life of nature, speaks of a tribe of huntsmen, among whom such a deed of prowess was deemed not unworthy of their deity. Traits like these seem to point back to a time when Mithra was perhaps the supreme god of some Indo-Iranian tribe. He appears, however, in Zoroastrianism as one of the minor Yazatas. "On trouve," says M. Cumont, "au XIV^e siècle avant notre ère, Mithra, Varouna, Indra et les Nasatiya mentionnés comme dieux de Mitani (Mésopotamie du Nord), dans les inscriptions cunéiformes de Cappadoce." At a later period Mithra is regarded as Ahoura Mazda's representative upon earth. We may compare with this the Hebrew conception of the "Angel of Yahweh," who practically stands for Yahweh in manifest form. Finally, as the Supreme Being becomes more transcendent, Mithra is looked upon as the mediator between Him and mankind. Plutarch, for instance, says :¹ "Zoroaster called the one (god) Oromazes and the other (the evil god) Aramanios, and further announced that the one resembled light, especially of things sensible,

¹ *De Iside et Osiride*, xlv. 33.

and the other contrariwise, darkness and ignorance, while between the two was Mithres ; wherefore the Persians call Mithres the 'mediator.'" When the Persian magi came into contact with the Chaldeans, Mithra passed under the influence of astrology, and became identified with the sun. "The transformation wrought in the beliefs of the Persians by Semitic theories was of so profound a character, that centuries after, in Rome, the original home of Mithra was not infrequently placed on the banks of the Euphrates."¹ The spread of Mithraism to Asia Minor was largely due to Iranian diaspora. "Des communautés de Mages étaient établies non seulement dans l'est de l'Asie mineure, mais en Galatie, en Phrygie, en Lydie, et même en Egypte, et restaient partout attachées avec une ténacité persistante à leurs mœurs et à leurs croyances."² After the Macedonian conquests and the consequent ferment which followed the mingling of East and West, Mithraism continued to hold its ground in Western Asia. Indeed it became still more firmly established under the successors of Alexander than it had been under the Satraps of the great king. Even in Greece—although that land could not accept a god from her hereditary enemy—the name of Mithra became well known, if not popular. Asia Minor may be regarded as the birthplace of Mithraism as it appears in our era, for it was there that the cult received its definite form.³ In a similar way the birthplace of Christianity as it has come down to us may be regarded as being in the geographical

¹ Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

² Cumont, *Les Religions Orientales*, p. 168.

³ "Entstanden werden die Mysterien des Mithras nicht in Persien sein (denn da war dazu wenigstens in achämenidischer Zeit keine Veranlassung), sondern in Kleinasien." (Clemen, *op. cit.*, p. 10).

sphere of Paul's activities and of Northern Africa rather than in Palestine. Only a few evidences of Mithra-worship in the time of the first Cæsars have been found in the West. They include a Græco-Aramaic inscription from Cappadocia of a general with a Persian name who worshipped Mithra; another inscription from Amasia in Pontus which speaks of an initiate of the "soldier" degree; a mithræum in Trapezus; and coins both from Pontus and Tarsus bearing figures of Mithra. The evidence of Mithra-worship at Tarsus is particularly interesting, because it proves the possibility that Paul, as a child, may have been insensibly influenced by this mystery religion.¹ According to Plutarch, the pirate colony, which established itself in Cilicia in the last century B.C., were worshippers of Mithra, and in their struggle against the arms of Rome they familiarized the Empire with the name of their god as being one who had inspired a band of brigands to pit their puny power against the imperial legions. By the time of this writer (*i.e.* after 50 A.D.) Mithraism had begun to attract general notice in the West. It is remarkable that Plutarch, who speaks of the cult of Mithra, appears to be unacquainted with the religion which was, within three centuries, to become mistress of the world. His silence is the more noticeable because he frequently deals with questions which are closely related to Christianity.

The diffusion of Mithraism during the first two centuries A.D. resembles, in many respects, that of Christianity. There is, however, nothing to show that its advance was ever aided by the services of a Paul. Every-

¹ Even Professor Carl Clemen, after throwing doubt upon any positive proof of the cult's existence in this city, admits, with Wendland, that its presence there is a possibility (*eine Möglichkeit*). (*Op. cit.*, p. 11.)

thing points to the probability that merchants, slaves, and soldiers were Mithra's missionaries. Wherever, from Britain to Babylon, commerce was conducted, wherever Asiatic slaves were imported, wherever the Roman legions are known to have been permanently stationed, there we may confidently expect to find relics of Mithraism.¹ "Mithraism spread with the suddenness of a flash of gunpowder," says M. Cumont.² By A.D. 180 it had established itself in the heart of Rome, and at last, after long remaining the religion of the lowly, it gained the royal favour. The Emperor Commodus was initiated c. A.D. 182, and became the patron of Mithraism, as Constantine became the patron of Christianity more than a century later. And in each case the conversion of the emperor brought similar results. As soon as the monarch had become an initiate, Mithra was immediately the favourite god in the pantheon of the Roman court and aristocracy. Men who cared nothing for the new religion's stern call to battle against evil were initiated into the Mithraic cult. For more than a hundred years Mithraism continued to prosper, and we read of Diocletian, Galerius, and Licinius meeting in A.D. 307 at Carnutum on the Danube, and there dedicating a

¹ In England an interesting example is the Mithraic chapel at Housteads, Northumberland, which contains a representation of Mithra being born from a rock. The latter is in the shape of an egg, so that Mithra appears as a chicken emerging from the egg-shell. The central idea of "rock-birth" was probably suggested by the spark which apparently leaps out from the rock when it is struck (cf. *Forerunners and Rivals of Christianity*, Legge, vol. i. p. 242). On the south side of the ancient Church of St. Mary, Wareham, Dorset, is a semi-subterranean chapel (now called the Chapel of King Edward the Martyr). It is known to have stood here for centuries before the large church was built. Its situation, structure, and history all point to its having been a mithræum used by the soldiers of the Roman garrison, relics of whose heathen worship have been discovered in the vicinity.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 83.

temple to Mithra, "the Protector of their empire." The likelihood of this religion ever being replaced by Christianity must have appeared at this time remote indeed. An examination of the doctrines, rites, and methods of Mithraism will, however, reveal the fact that this cult shows certain forms of weakness when compared with Christianity. These weaknesses, combined with misfortunes to Mithraism due to adventitious circumstances, together with the persistently hostile pressure of its subsequent conqueror, eventually led to its complete destruction in the West.

The feature which distinguished Mithraism from all the other oriental religions that spread westward was its dualism. This doctrine had been taken over from Zoroastrianism. In their contact with Persian dualism, Christianity and Mithraism may be said to have had a common ancestor six centuries before they came into conflict. The Jews of Christ's time retained, as a legacy from the Exile, the Persian form of belief which deified the principle of evil. This principle, through the medium of Judaism, passed into Christianity as "Satan," the "Prince of this World." The great power of dualism as a doctrine lies in its correspondence with actual experience. Life is a struggle, and Mithraism, with its rousing summons to arms, inspired initiates with a fighting power and an incentive to action, which were absent from every other mystery religion except Christianity. Dualism as an idea was nothing new. But the philosophical recognition of dualism which was, in the main, characteristic of the Pythagorean and Platonic schools had not that moral driving power which distinguished the doctrine of dualism as it was taught by these two rival religions, Christianity and

Mithraism. The initiate of Mithra had enlisted in a great army which was struggling against the forces of evil and darkness. He had taken the *sacramentum*, the oath of allegiance; and, as Mithra's sworn warrior, tried and disciplined, he was called upon to live.

There were seven degrees of initiation in Mithraism: the "Ravens" (for children), the "Hidden Ones"¹ (for adolescents), the "Soldiers," the "Lions," the "Persians," the "Runners of the Sun," and the "Fathers." Full initiation—which was not reached until the third or fourth degree, *i.e.* the "Soldiers" or the "Lions"—involved a baptism, which so closely resembled Christian baptism that Tertullian ascribes the likeness to the work of the devil: "The devil baptizes certain persons, his believers; he promises the forgiveness of sin by this washing; and, if I still remember me of Mithra, he marks there his soldiers on the forehead, he celebrates the 'panis oblationem,' et imaginem resurrectionis inducit, et sub gladio redimit coronam."² Tertullian was the son of a centurion, and it is not improbable that he had personal experience of the rites of a religion which drew most of its recruits from the army.

The initiation of the "Soldier," to which Tertullian refers in this passage, contained some uplifting symbolism. The mystic was baptized and marked upon the forehead with a hot iron as a sign of his devotion to Mithra. A crown was then presented to him upon a sword, but he thrust the diadem from him with the words, "Mithra is my crown," and never afterwards was he garlanded, even at a feast. Another

¹ The custom of hiding boys and girls from the community at the age of puberty is found among most primitive peoples (*cf.* p. 32), and perhaps accounts for the name of this degree.

² *De Præscr.*, xl.

of the rites of Mithraism was the taurobolium, which was borrowed from the Attis cult. The believer who had been baptized in the blood of the slaughtered bull was said to have been "reborn for eternity." In the passage which we have quoted above Tertullian mentions the *panis oblationem*. Justin Martyr speaks in more detail of the resemblance between this rite and the Christian eucharist. After quoting the words of institution in the latter, he adds: "Which too the evil demons imitating, delivered to be observed in the mysteries of Mithra. For that bread and a cup of water are presented in the mystic rites of initiation, accompanied by certain words (μετ' ἐπιλόγων τινῶν), you either know or may learn."¹ The details of this sacred meal of Mithraism have not been preserved in any liturgical form,² and must be reconstructed from such chance references as those of Justin and Tertullian, from the Mithraic myth, and from a few pictorial representations of the scene which have been discovered. One of the latter (reproduced in M. Cumont's *Mysteries of Mithra*, fig. 38, p. 160) depicts two persons, initiates of the senior degrees, reclining on a couch. In front of them, and in the forefront of the picture, is a tripod, upon which are four small loaves of bread, each marked with a cross.³ On either side of the

¹ 1 *Apol.*, lxvi.

² The so-called "Mithrasliturgie," discovered in the course of Egyptian excavations and now at Paris, contains instructions and prayers for the Mithra cult. They are interwoven with numerous magic symbols and formulæ; but whether these originally belonged to the work, or were added later, is uncertain. The date of the papyrus has been placed at c. 150 A.D. Cf. Dieterich, "Eine Mithrasliturgie."

³ These crosses, which are formed by diagonals drawn at right angles across the circular loaves, recall the "Swastika," a symbol which is associated with sun-worship. Precisely similar crosses may still be seen high up on the exterior walls of the magnificent Christian Church of St. Sophia at Constantinople.

tripod are two initiates, representing the "Lion," "Persian," "Soldier," and "Hidden" degrees. One of these, the Persian, is offering a goblet to the two reclining upon the couch, while another is holding a similar vessel. The place which this "Abendmahl" holds in Mithraic doctrine is revealed by an examination of the myth. According to this myth the creation of the world had resulted from Mithra's sacrifice of the sacred bull. From this animal's body had proceeded every kind of life. The evil principle had endeavoured to destroy mankind by a universal drought, but Mithra fired his arrows against a rock, from which there immediately gushed forth streams of water. Then Ahriman and his devas brought a flood upon the earth ; but one man, instructed by Mithra, built an ark, in which he saved himself and the animals. Finally a world-wide conflagration threatened the existence of all life ; but once more, by the help of Mithra, the followers of Ahoura Mazda were saved. The day at length arrived when Mithra's labours upon earth on behalf of mankind were complete. He thereupon celebrated a last supper with Helios and those companions who had continued with him in his tribulations ; after which he ascended to heaven in the chariot of the sun. But once more, so his followers believed, Mithra would return to earth, and would repeat the sacrifice of the sacred bull. Then, from its fatness, mixed with haoma, he would prepare a beverage for his initiates which would endow them with immortality. Mithra's last supper upon earth had been but an earnest of this future banquet ; so that the Mithraic eucharist, in being a memorial of the supper, was also an anticipation of the banquet. Thus, as the "Lord's Supper" in Christianity is a "showing

forth " of the sacrifice on Calvary, so the sacred meal in Mithraism was a remembrance of the twofold sacrifice of the sacred bull. The elements, bread and water, were, in a manner, the substance of the bull, from whose body corn and grape had originally sprung. And there remained a reminiscence of the time when, as in all primitive religions, the god and his animal were one, *i.e.* when Mithra and his bull were identical. Accordingly, participation in the sacred food of the "eucharist" ensured the presence of Mithra within the initiate, and so strengthened him in his contest against the powers of evil. On the front side of the "altar," which was situated in the apse of every mithræum, was a representation of Mithra slaughtering his sacred bull for the life of the world; and on the back side of the altar, if—as was usually the case—it could be revolved, Mithra was shown in the act of instituting his last supper. It is precisely the two scenes which correspond to these in the Christian religion, namely, the Crucifixion and the Last Supper, which are depicted in the east end of nearly every Christian church to-day.

Among all these striking resemblances between Mithraism and Christianity, we are apt to overlook certain very important differences. Such are the following:—

1. While both religions preached brotherhood, justice, and a final judgment when the wrongs of this life would be righted, while both emphasized the necessity of purity and regarded ascetic exercises as praiseworthy, yet Mithraism differed from Christianity in preferring the military virtues, in placing strength and bravery above gentleness and leniency.¹

¹ "Der Sieg des Christentums über den Mithriazismus war ein Sieg des weiblichen Gemüt's über rohe männliche Naturkraft," says Dr.

2. M. Cumont affirms "it was a strong source of inferiority for Mazdaism that it believed in only a mythical redeemer."¹ But when we consider how little reference St. Paul makes to the historic Jesus, how in 2 Cor. v. 16 he says he had banished from his mind all knowledge of "Christ after the flesh," it is obvious that the historicity of Jesus' life-story was not of paramount importance in the propagation of Christianity. Further, the life-long devotion and physical sacrifices of the worshippers of Isis and Cybele show that these deities were not regarded as "mythical" in the sense of having no real existence. Hence we must conclude that the absence of a historical Saviour in Mithraism did not constitute a serious handicap in the struggle of this religion against Christianity.

3. While the spread both of Christianity and Mithraism from the East was facilitated by political unity and by the need for some moral stiffening to counteract the licentiousness of the Empire—a need which both religions were capable of supplying; and while both appealed to the lower classes and addressed themselves to the emotions rather than to the intellect; yet their initial line of geographical advance was not the same. Mithraism spread over the Danube provinces and Germany; and was carried to remote villages by merchants, whom the lack of competition compensated for the paucity of population in these out-of-the-way districts. Christianity became diffused principally in Asia Minor, Greece, and Syria; and was chiefly confined to the larger centres of

Lülmann (*Neutestamentliche Probleme*, p. 25). This is perhaps an exaggeration. The manly spirit of Mithraism is admirably reproduced in Mr. Kipling's poem, "A Prayer to Mithras," in *Puck of Pook's Hill*.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 195.

commerce, as the word "pagan," which originally signified simply a "countryman," evidences.¹

4. This difference in their sphere of geographical advance was partly due to Christians' avoidance of positions under the government; for Christianity never relaxed its uncompromising hatred of paganism, and any official government position involved at least acquiescence in heathen rites. Mithraism was always avowedly ready to mingle with existing cults. This broad-minded attitude eventually had the effect of limiting its ethical influence.

5. Neither Christianity nor Mithraism allowed any official position to women. This was due to their origin in the East, where the social status of women was insignificant. Christianity, however, did have it laid down as a principle that ideally there was no distinction between male and female; although the apostle who enunciates this is still fettered by the bonds of his Jewish upbringing to the extent that he "suffers not a woman to teach," and would have her "keep silence in the Church." But Mithraism appears to have had little or no place at all for women. Most of them found a religious home in the cult of Cybele, which had sheltered Mithraism under the wing of its official status when Mithra had first arrived in Rome. "There are, among hundreds of inscriptions (of Mithraism) that have come down to us, none which mentions a priestess, a female initiate, or even a donatress."²

¹ Thus, as Harnack says, "Legt man eine Karte der Verbreitung des Christentums und die der Verbreitung des Mithrasdienstes (für den Orient) nebeneinander—dort ist weiss, was hier schwarz ist, und umgekehrt." (*Mission und Ausbreitung des Christentums in den ersten drei Jahrhunderten*, vol. ii. p. 271).

² Cumont, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

6. Such neglect of one half of humanity, as was involved in the restriction of Mithraism to men, must necessarily have been a handicap to the spread of this religion in a western country. But this was not the only regard in which Mithraism never really succeeded in disguising its Eastern origin. For instance, it assisted by its influence to transform the emperor from the first magistrate in Rome into an eastern βασιλεύς and θεός. This brought the worship of Mithra into imperial favour; but it did not help to popularize the religion among the people, for the idea of the king's divinity was never really acceptable to western minds. Christianity stripped itself of its oriental dress to a very much greater extent.

7. A minor difference between Christianity and Mithraism lay in the fact that the latter was a "nature religion" in the best sense of the words. Christianity abhorred the æsthetic as being essentially evil. In this respect Mithraism was before its time. The eyes of the nobler men of the first century of our age were blind to the beauty of Nature. They classed beauty with sensuality; both were lures of the devil. The attitude of Mithraism in this particular probably contributed to its ruin, since the more seriously inclined would tend to avoid a religion which retained the æsthetic traits of the demoralizing cults of the past.

The fall of Mithraism was rapid. Constantine, as a Christian, was not a persecutor; but, under his successors, Christianity made short work of her now vanquished rival. In the reign of Constantius, we are told, "no one any longer dared to watch the rising or setting sun, and even farmers and sailors refrained from observing the stars." In most cases the followers of Mithra, "the Friend"—for this is the meaning of

the name in Sanskrit—could have experienced but little difficulty in transferring their allegiance to Jesus, “the Saviour.” The same fraternity, succour, and solace were offered in both communities. Many of the same legends attached to Mithra and to Christ : for instance, that which tells of the worship of shepherds at the divine infant’s birth. The Christian Church’s economy of baptism, confirmation, and eucharist were similar, in many respects, to that of the seven degrees of initiation in Mithraism. Moreover, by the time Mithraism fell, these rites were celebrated by Christians in buildings which, with their altars, reredoses, lights, and images, must have presented less contrast to the Mithræum than exists to-day between the “high” and “low” church places of worship in England. Further, the new converts could still celebrate Sunday as their chief day of worship ; and December 25th as the birthday of their Redeemer, the shedding of whose blood had brought salvation to the world. They could still look forward to a final conflagration, a hell, and a resurrection of the flesh such as Mithraism—in contrast to most other oriental Mystery Religions—provided for the more materially-minded of her sons who were unable to appreciate the stellar theory of a mere survival of divine essence.

IV.—THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

CHAPTER XIII

THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

RELIGION, throughout the eastern Mediterranean area, was in a condition of flux at the time of Christ's birth. The opening decades of our era marked the commencement of a reaction from the spirit of irreligion which had been a feature of the Empire during the last century B.C. Owing largely to the increase of wealth and the consequent artificiality of life, that century had been a time when faith in the gods and hope in immortality were looked upon as the beliefs of children. A man like Cicero, for instance, had no prospect of reunion when Tullia, his daughter, died. A contemporary inscription on a grave evidences the degree to which blatant materialism had reached : " I was not, and I became ; I was, and am no more. This much is true ; who says other, lies ; for I shall not be. And thou who livest, drink, play, come." It is true that in most places the cults of the gods continued, but, except perhaps in country districts, this was done by the ignorant from motives of superstition, and by the educated from motives of æsthetic sentiment, custom, or veneration for antiquity. There did not exist, in either class, any vital religious spirit such as had moved their ancestors when they had practised the same rites generations before.

This decadence of religion was accompanied by a decay of moral stamina which alarmed those who had at heart the interests of the Empire. Tacitus speaks of the first seventy or eighty years of our age as a period " rich

in disasters, gloomy in wars, rent with sedition, savage in its hours of peace. . . . Incendiarism, defilement of sacred rites, adulteries in high places, the sea crowded with exiles, island rocks drenched with murder.”¹ Superstition, fear of ten thousand demons, and resort to magic were rampant.² Life was thus rendered almost unbearable for the majority of people, to whom the teachings of the philosophers brought no freedom. On the other hand, the more sophisticated minority only followed these masters of philosophy in their ridicule of popular superstition, and showed no taste for the uplifting moral teaching which most schools, especially those of the Epicureans and the Stoics, enjoined.

A turn in the religious tide may be traced from the succession of Augustus. By the middle of the first century A.D. a veritable religious revival had set in. Mythology, and especially Greek mythology, which had thrown its mantle over the various cults from Spain to Mesopotamia, was now allegorized, not only by moral philosophers, but also by those for whom religion was primarily a matter of the heart. Thus Plutarch teaches, “If Ares be evil spoken of, we must imagine it to be said of war ; if Hephaiston, of fire ; if Zeus, of fate ; but if anything honourable is said, it is said of the real gods.” While Philosophy thus allegorized and synthesized the gods of antiquity, the oriental religions, which we have considered in Chapters IX and XII, were beginning to impart to faith a personal significance which had been hitherto unknown to the religion of the city communities from which the Empire had sprung. These Eastern cults were propagated mainly by men who had been expatriated by all-conquering Rome, and who had, in consequence, abandoned any national outlook. They all preached a

¹ *Hist.*, i. 2.

² Cf. Glover, *Conflict of Religions*, pp. 15 f.

personal salvation for those individuals who were initiated into the mysteries of their several sects. There had been Mystery Religions in Greece for many centuries. But these had been of a communal character. Now, however, this type of religion, only with an individualistic colouring, was revived by the spread of Eastern cults through the Roman World. "Men made a practice of linking their lives and souls to gods, who generally had no connection whatever with their tribes and races, in ceremonies the meaning of which they could not explain and did not think worth while to try to explain, they rested on the tradition that this was the way, and on the assurance of their feelings that they had achieved what they sought—on nothing more objective."¹ Originally the underlying idea of these mystery rites had doubtless been magical, *i.e.* they were enacted in the belief that the gods were thereby compelled to grant the benefits desired. The sacrificial system of much of the earlier Greek religion had been built upon this magical basis.² However, by the time which we are now considering, such magical rites had probably become sacramental in character, *i.e.* their celebration was regarded as the fulfilment of a command, and as the covenanted means of acquiring blessings which the deity was anxious, and had thus promised, to confer. The sectaries of these oriental cults looked upon this earthly life as unworthy of the serious consideration of the initiate, who, after introduction into the sacred mystery, was considered to have exchanged the life of the earth for the life of the spirit. Among such men, introspection and ecstasy became the highest virtues, while patriotism and public service were practically despised

¹ T. R. Glover, *Progress in Religion*, p. 39.

² Cf. Harrison, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-29.

as being vices. Thus the influence of these Eastern doctrines clearly acted as a solvent that inevitably tended to split up the body politic. Ostensibly, by lending their support to despotism and to the emperor's claim to divinity, they upheld the Empire; but secretly they were responsible for that subtle process of disintegration which is inseparable from an individualistic religion.

Before observing a remarkable characteristic of paganism in the Roman Empire at the time of Christ, we will mention five of its main features and doctrines which have found a place in Christianity. (1) Faith in redeemer-gods who have died and risen again. It is because this doctrine was already well known to Gentile converts that St. Paul, in writing to them, never discusses the special significance of the death of Jesus as a redemptive act. Non-Jewish Christians would naturally regard it as such, by reason of their upbringing in the Mystery Religions.¹ (2) Cleansing and rebirth through Baptism; e.g. the "Taurobolium" in the cult of Attis and afterwards in that of Mithra. (3) Union with the deity by means of sacraments. These three dogmas have already been examined in some detail in Chapters IX, X, and XII. (4) A fourth feature, which will be considered in the next chapter, is the Psychology of the Mystery Religions. This, through the medium of the Pauline epistles, has had an important influence upon the psychology of orthodox Christianity. (5) Lastly, the custom of commemorating their master by the celebration of a common meal, which was observed by the followers of certain great philosophers, has perhaps influenced the development of the Christian eucharist. This meal of remembrance was partaken of in a spirit of almost religious devotion to the dead.

¹ Cf. Lake, *Earlier Epistles*, pp. 234, 410.

Philosophers like Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Socrates, and Epicurus, were virtually worshipped as divine teachers who had brought peace and freedom to mankind. "The Pythagorean community is the nearest analogy presented in the Mediterranean world to the phenomena of the Christian Church," says J. L. Johnston in *Some Alternatives to Jesus Christ*. The same writer calls attention to the farewell epistle of Epicurus, in which he bequeaths to his disciples instructions for the celebration of a common meal after his death, in memory of himself and of his favourite pupil Metrodorus. Mr Johnston adds: "In such traits we find already reverberating certain notes and chords in the human soul, which were those on which the Christian revelation improvised its great harmony."¹

Perhaps the most noteworthy peculiarity of the religious situation which we are considering was the spirit of toleration which was everywhere manifest.

The devotees of the various Mystery Religions recognized that, under different names and different rites, they all worshipped the same deity.² Isis appears to Lucius in a dream as he lies in ass's form upon the sands of Cenchreæ and addresses him with these words: "Lo! I am here, Lucius, moved by thy prayers, I, the mother of Nature, mistress of the elements, primal offspring of the ages, chief of the divinities . . . the single form of gods and goddesses. . . . My divinity, one under many forms, the whole world worshippeth with divers rites and many names. . . . Mother of the gods . . . Cecropian Minerva

¹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 131, 132.

² "Alle Mysterienreligionen des Altertums geben sich in hellenistischer Zeit als für *alle* Menschen bestimmt, aber alle erkennen sich untereinander an. Jede will die *Urreligion* geben, die den ersten Menschen von Gott gelehrt ist; aber dieser *Urreligion* haben alle anderen Menschen von hier angenommen; alle Völker verehren unter wechselnden Namen und Kulte dieselbe Gottheit." (*H.M.R.*, p. 15.)

. . . Paphian Venus . . . Dictynnan Diana . . . Stygian Proserpina . . . Ceres . . . Juno . . . Bellona . . . Hecate . . . Rhamnusia ; but the Æthiopians . . . the Arians . . . and the Egyptians . . . worship me with proper rites and call me by my true name, Queen Isis.”¹ This liberal outlook was not confined to the Mystery Religions. Throughout the empire toleration of new sects was such as has only been equalled in recent times in the most enlightened countries. In any city the addition of a strange deity was a matter of indifference. Pagan gods were not jealous gods. Thus, as Professor Ramsay points out, it was the tradesmen whose incomes were affected, and not the priests of Diana, who organized the attack against Paul at Ephesus ;² while at Lystra, probably after the apostle had preached there for some time, he was greeted as a divinity by the local hierarchy, until the Jews, to whom toleration was hateful, systematically stirred up a persecution.³

The official representatives of the Roman government seldom interfered with the religion of their subjects. So long as barbarity and sedition were not encouraged, and emperor-worship was given its due place, the *concilium* (the local self-governing religious body) was allowed considerable latitude. This imperial cult, practised in the East for centuries, had been introduced into the west by the Seleucidæ, who imposed it upon their subjects in Asia Minor. Early in the second century B.C. the Greek city states dedicated temples to “ Rome ” and paid divine honours to Roman governors. Mark Antony proclaimed himself to the Greeks as an incarnation of Dionysos. Before the beginning of our era the worship of Rome and of the ruling emperor was established in every province. By the more thoughtful it

¹ Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, xi.

² Acts xix.

³ Acts xiv. 6 ff.

was no doubt observed more as an expression of loyalty rather than as a religion. The emperors themselves (for instance Octavian, who was the first to *order* the cult, and then only in the provinces) probably recognized in it a means of synthesizing the many heterogeneous elements in their vast dominions, and so encouraged it with a view to promoting political cohesion. In the only case in which it failed to effect this purpose, namely that of the Jews, it was not insisted upon ; which shows that it was regarded as a matter of policy,¹ not of religion. The cult, in co-ordinating the various religions of a place under a single hierarchy, involuntarily prepared the way for the Christian Church.

To such personal factors as we have noticed, viz. a general rise of the religious tide in human hearts, a tendency to syncretism and to toleration, we may add the transition of society into a democracy, which—together with the existence of a world empire—stimulated the conception of the brotherhood of man. All these components in the outlook upon life which prevailed at the time helped to make the Empire a missionary field thoroughly prepared to receive the seed of any new religion, particularly a religion like Christianity which emphasized individuality and brotherhood.

But the ground might have lain fallow and unsown had not certain material conditions, which had never before prevailed, coincided with this state of human receptivity. These conditions were : (1) *The ease and safety which attended travelling* ; (2) *the almost universal use of the Greek tongue*.

“ It is the simple truth,” says Professor Ramsay, “ that travelling, whether for business or pleasure, was

¹ The attempt to introduce Caligula's statue into the temple at Jerusalem was no doubt but an incident in this policy.

contemplated and performed under the Empire with an indifference, confidence, and, above all, certainty which were unknown in after centuries until the introduction of steamers.”¹ Irenæus says: “Mundus pacem habet per Romanos, et nos sine timore in viis ambulamus et navigamus quocumque voluerimus.”²

The common use of Greek throughout the Eastern Empire was a result of the general policy of the Romans' administration, which always aimed at adapting itself to circumstances. Thus in Asia Minor, where Greek had been, before the advent of the Romans, the language of the garrison towns, the new rulers made little or no attempt to naturalize Latin. “In the East a Græco-Roman civilisation, using the Greek language, was the type which Rome aimed at establishing. . . . Everyone who wrote or read, wrote or read Greek.”³ In the Western Empire Latin had replaced the various languages of the conquered peoples, except among the lowest classes and in the most outlying districts. Consequently a knowledge of Greek and Latin enabled a traveller from one end of the Roman world to the other to make himself understood. Thus missionaries, or at any rate missionaries like St. Paul, who confined themselves to the main arteries of civilization, had no language difficulty to overcome.

These facilities of language and of transit, combined with certain human factors in the general situation which prevailed all over the Empire, rendered the first century of our age a time of unique opportunity for the propagation of religious faiths. Among the many such that were “stirring with the time” were two which were eventually destined to surpass all others in importance. These two were Christianity and Mithraism.

¹ *Church in Roman Empire*, pp. 364 f.

² iv. 30. 3.

³ Ramsay, *Paul, the Traveller*, pp. 131-133.

CHAPTER XIV

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

THE psychological views of the New Testament, *i.e.* the theories by which the phenomena of personal life are conceived, show considerable variation. There are at least three different conceptions about the constitution and working of man's essential being. These may be called the "Synoptic," the "Johannine," and the "Pauline" conceptions. The psychology of the Synoptists closely resembles that of the Old Testament. In the Old Testament man is represented as consisting of body and spirit, a distinction which—as we observed in reviewing the evolution of religion—must have arisen in the earliest days of the human race. According to the Book of Genesis, man's body is moulded from the dust of the earth. Only after God has "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" does he become a living soul" (נִפְשׁ חַיָּה) (Gen. ii. 7). Here, and throughout the Old Testament, נִפְשׁ (LXX, ψυχή) is the word which represents the living principle in man.¹ Regarded on his material side, he may be spoken of as flesh בָּשָׂר (LXX, σάρξ); and, on the other hand, when looked upon as a spiritual, immortal entity, he may be denoted by spirit רוּחַ¹ (LXX, πνεῦμα). But both body and spirit (or soul) together are essential components of the complete man. Moreover, when, at

¹ In the later books of the Old Testament little distinction is made between נִפְשׁ and רוּחַ.

death, the soul departs from the body, men continue to exist in Sheol, not as spirits (רוחות), but as "shades" (רפאים). This shows why it was that, in Jewish ideas about the resurrection, a return of the body was usually regarded as essential. A bodiless resurrection would seem merely as a rising of the "shadows" of those who had died.

The Synoptic Gospels represent Jesus as making no attempt to elaborate this simple psychology. Metaphysical questions, such as the possibility of pre-existence, were not unknown to Judaism of the first century. For instance, in Wisdom viii. 19, 20, we read : " Now I was a child of parts, and a good soul fell to my lot ; nay rather, being good, I came into a body undefiled." In John ix. 2, the disciples of Jesus are perhaps represented as holding this view of the pre-existence of the soul by their question, " Rabbi, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind ? " But even in this Johannine writing, which evinces an interest in the very matter of pre-existence, Jesus is depicted as deliberately passing over the opening here given for metaphysical teaching in order to direct his disciples' attention to the immediate practical issues involved. In other passages our Lord speaks of man as composed of soul (ψυχή) and body (σῶμα), and—although the latter is represented as the less important side of human nature—both are described as taking part in the life to come : " Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul : but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell " (Matt. x. 28). The word " spirit " (πνεῦμα) is often used interchangeably with soul (ψυχή) in the Synoptic Gospels. Thus, in Mark viii. 12, Jesus is referred to as sighing

deeply in spirit. In Mark xiv. 34, He says to his disciples, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful. . . ." Four verses further on he speaks of the disciples' "spirit" being willing. In Luke viii. 55, the revival of life in Jairus' daughter is spoken of as the return of her spirit. There are other uses of the word spirit (*πνεῦμα*) in the first three gospels. It signifies the Spirit of God (*cf.* Mark i. 10, the appearance of the Spirit at the baptism of Jesus). In Luke xxiv. 39, it has the meaning of "ghost" ("a spirit hath not flesh and bones"). Elsewhere it frequently denotes evil spirits or demons, who were commonly supposed to lurk everywhere around mankind and to be the cause of various pathological states, such as insanity and epilepsy.¹

On turning to the Pauline Epistles, we find that the apostle's psychological conceptions involve certain ideas which are not found in the Synoptic Gospels. In some cases he still uses both soul (*ψυχή*) and spirit (*πνεῦμα*) to denote the life of man in its personal as opposed to its material aspect. For instance, in 1 Corinthians ii. 11: "For who among men knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of the man . . . ?"; or in Romans viii. 16: "The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit. . . ." This use corresponds not only to the Old Testament and synoptic usage but also to that of Hellenism.² Professor Kennedy, however, speaks of this employment of *πνεῦμα* "to denote the inner life of man, apart from

¹ *Cf.* Edersheim, *op. cit.*, Appendix xiii.

² *πνεῦμα* occurs in the Magic Texts and in the Greek of Paul's time not only as "eine allgemeine Gottesbezeichnung," but also "ohne jede übernatürliche und aussermenschliche Bedeutung ganz einfach nur unser immaterieller, geistiger Teil, entgegengesetzt dem *σῶμα* oder *σκήνος*, völlig gleichgestellt und nach Blieben wechselnd mit dem Wort *ψυχή*." (Reitzenstein, *H.M.R.*, p. 48.)

any emphasis on its divine element," as being "only another proof of St. Paul's fidelity to Old Testament terminology."¹ But, since—as Kennedy admits²—the same usage was also current in Hellenism, it seems hardly legitimate to make this inference from its adoption by Paul.

In more than 80 per cent. of the cases in which the word *πνεῦμα* occurs in the Pauline Epistles, it denotes the Spirit of God, not that of man. Here again the apostle is following the practice both of the Old Testament and also of Hellenistic religious writings.³ It is when the apostle identifies this Spirit with the glorified Christ that he makes a definite departure from the Old Testament and synoptic conceptions. In 2 Corinthians iii. 17 St. Paul expressly states, "The Lord is the Spirit."⁴ "It may be said," writes Professor Kennedy, "that, as a matter of practical religious experience, Paul identifies the *πνεῦμα* with the indwelling Christ."⁵ Here we are drawing appreciably nearer the view of the Mystery Religions in which the Redeemer-God was usually merged in the Supreme Being.

Another difference from the psychological outlook of the Synoptists appears in St. Paul's doctrine of the

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 157.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 142.

³ Cf. *H.M.R.*, pp. 160, 161, where numerous examples are given from the collections of Wessely and of Dieterich.

⁴ The original title of Jesus appears to have been "teacher" or "rabbi"; but Hellenistic Jews who spoke Aramaic called him "Mar" (*e.g.* 1 Cor. xvi. 22), which Greek-speaking converts would translate by *κύριος*. Now *κύριος* was used by the worshippers of Isis, Osiris, and Serapis in Egypt, of Atargatis in Syria, of Hermes, etc., to denote the Saviour-God. It had also been employed in the LXX to translate the divine name. Thus its adoption as a title of Jesus by Greek-speaking converts facilitated the tendency which we find in the Pauline Epistles to regard Jesus as identical with the divine *πνεῦμα*, and also as a Saviour-God.

⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 136.

πνευματικός (*i.e.* the man indwelt by the Spirit) ; and his employment of ψυχικός to denote its opposite, viz. a man insensible to spiritual influence (A.V. and R.V. "natural"). ψυχικός occurs in 1 Corinthians ii. 14 ; xv. 44, 46. 1 Corinthians ii. 14, reads as follows : " The natural man (ψυχικός δὲ ἄνθρωπος) receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . because they are spiritually (πνευματικῶς) judged. But he that is spiritual (ὁ δὲ πνευματικός) judgeth all things. . . ." This verse occurs in a section (1 Cor. ii. 6-16) which is full of ideas characteristic of the Mystery Religions. H. L. Goudge says of it : " St. Paul's language may suggest that he had the Greek Mysteries in his mind when he speaks of the ' perfect,' of the ' wisdom that hath been hidden,' of the ' deep things of God ' ; he at all events uses language that recalls them." ¹ Consequently, when we find, in this passage, ψυχικός appearing with an extraordinary meaning (namely the contrary of πνευματικός), there is *a priori* a probability that such a use of the term is due to the influence of the Mystery Religions. This distinction between πνευματικός and ψυχικός seems to occur again in 1 Corinthians iii. 1, where the apostle writes : " And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual (πνευματικοίς), but as unto carnal (σαρκίνοις)." He does not call the Corinthians ψυχικοί, but σάρκινοι, because, in accordance with the significance of the word which we are considering, to have described them as ψυχικοί would have been tantamount to saying that they were utterly insensitive to the divine spirit. St. Paul's conception of the πνευματικός comes out more fully in 1 Corinthians ii. 16. There such a man is described as one who possesses the " mind of Christ "

¹ Westminster Commentaries, 1 Corinthians, p. 20.

(νοῦν χριστοῦ).¹ The apostle, as a πνευματικός, is conscious of being so inspired by Christ's νοῦς (or πνεῦμα) that he can say, "I live, and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me." (Gal. ii. 20). Reitzenstein cites, as an example of the pagan view of inspiration which prevailed at the time of Paul, Lucan's description of the god's possession of the Pythia: "The god entered into her, and drove out her former mind (*mens*) and bade the human being yield completely to him."² Although such a loss of personal identity as is here implied is not found in St. Paul's language, the passage belongs to the same circle of ideas as those which he expresses in Galatians ii. 20; 2 Corinthians xiii. 5; Romans viii. 10; and it shows that the apostle's opposition of πνεῦμα and ψυχή (*mens*)—which his employment of πνευμάτικος and ψυχικός evidences—was a conception current in Hellenism.

Perhaps the most remarkable distinction between Paul's psychology and that of Judaism lies in their teaching as to the effects of the indwelling of the Spirit. According to the apostle, the Spirit's presence accomplishes a man's salvation. The "saved" man is he who possesses the Spirit of Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of His" (Rom. viii. 9). But the indwelling of the Spirit effects a change in the believer. He becomes a new creature, a πνευματικός, and is raised into a higher sphere of existence.³ The same doctrine prevailed in contemporary paganism. "For St. Paul, as for the

¹ νοῦς here=πνεῦμα, as in the Hermetic literature. Cf. Dialogue between Hermes and his son Tat (*H.M.R.*, p. 35; and *Die antiken Mysterienreligionen*, pp. 33, 34, by Jacoby).

² *H.M.R.*, p. 50.

³ 2 Cor. v. 17, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation." Gal. vi. 15, "Neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation."

Mystery Religions, regeneration is intimately connected with communion with the Divine.”¹ All this is in marked contrast to the Jewish teaching, which regarded a man’s salvation as dependent upon conduct.² In the Old Testament the Spirit descends upon God’s servants and endues them with extraordinary powers for the accomplishment of some special work, from that of a craftsman to that of a prophet. But salvation is not confined to such men. Indeed in some cases—for instance, that of Samson—the eternal welfare of those upon whom the Spirit of the Lord came has remained a subject for speculation. Ecstatic states, which are always characteristic of a period of religious revival, seem to have been of considerable frequency in St. Paul’s day. The apostle recognizes that his converts at Corinth in their pre-Christian days had been “carried away” (ἀπαγόμενοι) by such.³ Christians evinced the same phenomena, and Paul accepts the current psychological explanation. They were the result of an indwelling spirit—for Christians the Holy Spirit, for heathens demonic spirits. The apostle even concedes the correctness of the pagan view that such a condition was a sign of regeneration. However, in fact, he combines with it the Jewish conception of salvation as dependent upon conduct, by requiring that the possession of the Spirit should show itself in a life of practical holiness. “One of Paul’s most splendid achievements in the life of the Early Church (was) the transformation of the conception of the Spirit as a fitful energy, accompanied by extraordinary manifestations, into that of

¹ Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

² Cf. Christ’s answer to the question, “What shall I do to inherit eternal life?” (Mark x. 17 ff.).

³ 1 Cor. xii. 2.

an abiding, inspiring power which controls conduct in the interests of love.”¹

There are many expressions with a psychological bearing in St. Paul's Epistles which—were they not so familiar—would strike the reader as being strangely different from those of the Old Testament or of the Synoptic Gospels. The Christian is said to be “transformed by the renewing of his mind” (Rom. xii. 2). He is “foreordained to be conformed to the image of God's Son” (Rom. viii. 29). His “inward man is renewed day by day” (2 Cor. iv. 16), “after the image of him that created him” (Col. iii. 10). This renewal of the inward man takes place as a result of the vision of Christ (2 Cor. iii. 18). Reitzenstein maintains that these ideas were all familiar to the Hellenistic mystic. He too believed in a metamorphosis from one glorified state to another, as the outcome of the indwelling spirit, which impressed its image upon the soul.² Similarly the conception of a spiritual body (σῶμα πνευματικόν), fashioned by Christ, and “conformed to the body of his glory” (Phil. iii. 21 ; 1 Cor. xv. 49), is paralleled in the semi-Egyptian Mithra-Liturgy. In this, the initiate, who would be born again and thereby become a son of God, invokes his own heavenly body, which is spoken of as having been fashioned for him by God in the world of light.³ Another illustration is to be found in Galatians iv. 19: “My little children, of whom I am again in travail until Christ be formed in you.” The unusual symbolism of this passage exactly reappears

¹ Kennedy, *op. cit.*, p. 287.

² *H.M.R.*, pp. 53 *et al.* : and cf. *Beginnings of Christianity*, p. 326: “The main note of these cults is the offer to men to become immortal or divine, and this is characteristically represented as the ‘gift of the Spirit.’”

³ Dietrich, *Eine Mithrasliturgie*, pp. 4 f.

in a prayer of an Egyptian magic text : " Come into me, Hermes, as the child in the mother's womb." ¹ It is true that the dates of these parallels from Hermetic literature cannot be fixed with absolute certainty. But, as we have seen in the case of Philo's writings, the Gnostic tendency existed many decades before the time of Paul. " There are," admits Professor Kennedy, " special strains of religious thought and feeling more or less common to all the Mystery Religions. . . . These appear and reappear in documents far removed from each other, and belonging to different spheres of culture. . . . Such phenomena demand time. And the time required will probably have to be measured by half-centuries rather than decades. . . . The elaborated form which we can trace in the second and third centuries A.D. postulates a lengthy development, and it is hazardous to dogmatize as to what was or was not possible, say, in the period from A.D. 30-100 or even earlier." ² In view of these facts, it does not seem presumptuous to conclude that such ideas of the Mystery Religions as we have quoted are pre-Pauline, and, since they are found grouped together in the apostle's writings (for instance, in 1 Cor. ii. 6-16), the theory that they were reached by Paul independently is precluded.

Environment is a subtle factor in moulding a man's life. The Hellenistic world in which St. Paul lived was full of the ideas of these Mystery Faiths, and—as the apostle endeavoured to " become all things to all men "—it was perhaps inevitable that he should make use of their conceptions to express his message. But the process of assimilation did not stop here. The influence of the Mystery Religions upon the

¹ Kenyon, *Greek Papyri*, i. p. 116.

² *Op. cit.*, p. 70.

Early Christian Church resulted in the adoption of some of their doctrines, in addition to the employment of their language. The truth of this statement is confirmed by a careful study of the way in which the Church solved certain eschatological, ethical, and christological problems which arose in the first century, and also by her development of sacramentalism.

CHAPTER XV

THE PROBLEMS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

DURING the first years of the existence of Christianity, the eschatological, ethical, and christological problems which were present in the Early Church differed but little from those of Judaism. The first Christians regarded Jesus as the Messiah who, in spite of the crucifixion, had been "designated the Son of God by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. i. 4). He would, they believed, shortly return to establish God's kingdom upon earth. The qualification for admittance into this kingdom was repentance. The kingdom was, indeed, that about which all the prophets had spoken, and to which every Jew looked forward. Perhaps the majority regarded its enjoyments as confined to those Israelites who were alive at the time of its inauguration, although some held that the sons of Jacob who had died, and even Gentiles, would not be excluded. The felicity of those who entered this kingdom might be fittingly compared with the good fellowship which prevails among those who sit down together at a banquet. "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God" says a fellow-guest of Jesus on one occasion (Luke xiv. 15) voicing this popular conception. And our Lord himself, in the upper room, expressed his conviction in the imminence of the kingdom with the words: "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of

the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom " (Matt. xxvi. 29 ; Mark xiv. 25 ; *cf.* Luke xxii. 29, 30). The complete change which took place in the christological and eschatological views of the Early Christian Church, and also the nature of the ethical problems which the new community was called upon to solve, may be traced to the influence of paganism, and particularly to that of the Mystery Religions.

Eschatological Problems.

St. Paul's teaching upon the subject of eschatology has been described as "the watershed between the synoptic idea of a kingdom on earth and the Fourth Gospel's 'many mansions' in heaven." The extent to which Jesus shared the popular synoptic views is uncertain. Wellhausen, Wrede, and others maintain that, for Jesus, prophetic reform came before Messianic triumph. Mr. Percy Gardner considers that such words as those of Mark xiv. 25 (*vide supra*) may not be the actual utterance of Jesus, in view of the fact that many of our Lord's parables represent him as depicting the kingdom as present, potentially and spiritually.¹ However, there can be no doubt that the first Christians and Paul, for the greater part of his life after conversion, expected an early reappearance of Jesus upon earth, followed by a millennium, when he would reign as the Messiah of God. These were simply the conceptions of Jewish apocalyptic applied to Jesus. But it is obvious that the lapse of a few decades rendered such views untenable. The passage of time transformed them from a lively

¹ *Religious Experience of St. Paul*, pp. 128-129.

hope into a dead weight, which the most buoyant faith could hardly expect to sustain. Their non-fulfilment must have vitiated the whole structure of any creed which held them as central.

A good example of the genius of St. Paul appears in his ability to appreciate the inadequacy of these Jewish anticipations of the future, and to direct the Christian hope towards new vistas. The development of his eschatological views can be traced in his epistles. 1 Thessalonians i. 9 f., shows that the apostle, during the earlier part of his evangelistic career, exhorted his hearers to turn from idols, "to serve a living and true God, and TO WAIT FOR HIS SON FROM HEAVEN, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, who delivereth from the wrath to come." In iv. 15, of the same epistle, we see that St. Paul expected the interval of waiting to be but brief. He numbers himself among those who would still be alive when the Lord reappeared: "We that are alive, that are left until the coming of the Lord, shall in no wise precede them that are fallen asleep." The same belief in a "parousia" during his own lifetime is found in 1 Corinthians vii. 29, written about four years later. In this chapter marriage is viewed in the light of the impending crisis: "But this I say, brethren, the time is shortened, that henceforth those that have wives may be as though they had none." The verse shows that a next generation does not enter into the apostle's calculations in considering the future of the Christian Church. It is true, as Paul admits, that some who had been looking for the return of Christ "have fallen asleep" (1 Cor. xv. 6); but their "sleep" will not be for long—for a period so short, indeed, that their present existence, whatever and

wherever it might be, is not otherwise referred to. The parousia is at hand, and then these faithful dead will be raised with spiritual bodies. "Behold," says the apostle, "I tell you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment . . . for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed." (1 Cor. xv. 51, 52). It is noteworthy that, although St. Paul still expects a parousia to take place within his own lifetime, yet there is a difference here from his view in 1 Thessalonians iv. 17. No mention is made to the Thessalonians about a "spiritual body." The appearance of this idea in 1 Corinthians xv. would seem to be the result of an endeavour on St. Paul's part to combine the Jewish and the Mystery Religion views of a future life.¹ The usual teaching upon this subject of these pagan cults was that the spirit continued to exist after death, and that the body was resolved into its original elements. St. Paul in 1 Corinthians xv. admits that the mode of future existence will be spiritual, but he maintains that the Jews are right in holding that it will be reached by means of a resurrection. Since St. Paul bases his argument for a resurrection of Christians upon that of Christ, it seems probable that he did not contemplate the possibility of the body being left to disintegrate in the grave after the resurrection, but that he believed that it would be transformed into spirit.² In Philippians i. 23, the apostle appears to have completely adopted the Mystery Religion view which regarded death as the putting off of the flesh, and as being immediately followed by the life in heaven with the Redeemer-God. He writes: "I am in a strait betwixt the two

¹ Cf. p. 81.

² Cf. *Resurrection of Jesus Christ* (Lake), pp. 20, 21.

(i.e. between the choice of life and death), having a desire to depart, and be with Christ; which is very far better." Thus for "Paul the aged" the parousia has fallen into the background and become almost as subsidiary as it is for the writer of the Fourth Gospel. The believer has not, as we are taught in 1 Corinthians xv. 6, to wait for the heavenly trumpet to sound before he can resume conscious life. Death is not a "falling asleep"; it is a "departing to be with Christ."

Ethical Problems.

We have already spoken of the immense weight of habitual and customary immorality against which Christianity had to struggle as soon as it entered the Gentile world. Some of this was a relic of the old nature religions, in which the act of reproduction and its symbols played such an important part. The significance of these was based upon the principles of imitative magic.¹ In St. Paul's time the worship of Aphrodite still represented πορνεία as a religious act. Certainly the better instructed minds in heathendom had already broken away from this conception, and temples like that of this goddess at Corinth were looked upon by many as brothels rather than as churches. But though perhaps the majority realized that they could no longer regard the satisfaction of their passions as an act of religious worship, yet they were able to represent religion as, at any rate, offering no check upon their desires. The general teaching of the Mystery Cults was that the man who had experienced a vision of the deity, and who had thus become ἐνθεός, or πνευματικός, was exalted

¹ Cf. Chapters II., IX., X.

into a higher sphere of existence.¹ The acts of the earthly body no longer concerned such a one, and he therefore remained sinless notwithstanding anything his body might do. St. Paul too spoke of his converts as *ἔνθεοι* and as *πνευματικοί*, but he demanded from Christian initiates a standard of morality totally different from this. It was true, as the Mystery Cults taught of their deities, that the revelation of Jesus, the Christian Redeemer, had set his followers free; but this freedom, in contrast to that of the pagan religions, was not to be used as an excuse for continuing in sin (Rom. vi. 1 f.). The bodies of Christians became the "temples of the Holy Ghost"² (1 Cor. vi. 19). This difference in ethical outlook between Christianity and the Mystery Religions underlies the references to sensuality in many passages in the New Testament (*e.g.* Rom. vi. ; Gal. v. 13 f. ; Jude 8 f. ; Eph. iv. 19-24 ; 2 Pet. ii. 10). In particular it accounts for the fact that the Early Church was anxious to uphold the doctrine of the resurrection of the flesh, since the opposite view was frequently connected with a degrading moral standard. Thus it was Christianity—aided at first by Mithraism and by Stoicism—which uncompromisingly attacked, and at last succeeded in completely crushing, the conscious religious expression of sexuality. A certain mawkishness in some of the Christian metaphors and symbols—particularly in its hymns—is the sole relic which shows that the old

¹ "In den Mysterienreligionen ist der Pneumatiker im Grunde ein Göttliches Wesen und ist trotz seines irdischen Leibes in eine andere Welt entrückt, die allein Wert und Wahrheit hat. Die Autonomie ist zuletzt bis zur Zügellosigkeit religiöser Phantasie. . . ." (Reitzenstein, *H.M.R.*, p. 61).

² St. Paul throughout this passage (1 Cor. vi. 13-20) boldly takes the Mystery Religions' conception of sexual union with the deity, and applies their language to the spiritual union between the believer and Christ.

tendency still exists. A large part of the "libido," which once found an outlet in the brutality and sensuality of antiquity, has now, chiefly through the influence of the Christian Church, been sublimated into higher and socially valuable channels.

Christological Problems.

In the introduction to a passage which abounds in the terminology of the Mystery Religions (1 Cor. i. 23), St. Paul says: "We preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block." It must be admitted that the Christ whom Paul preached appealed but little to the Jews. Before the apostle—who quickly became known as the apostle to the Gentiles—came on the scene, the spread of Christianity among Jesus' own countrymen had been considerable. "Three thousand souls" were added to the Church at Pentecost (Acts ii. 41). This aggregate is soon nearly doubled (Acts iv. 4). In Acts v. 14, we read that "believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women." In Acts vi. 1, we find the numbers are sufficiently large to require some definite organisation in order to cope with the problem of "poor relief" which had arisen. Six verses further on we are told that "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith." The mission in Samaria is an unqualified success (Acts viii.). Indeed, one might reasonably expect, from these early chapters of Acts, that Jesus is, after all, about to be generally recognized by the Jews as their promised Messiah. From the moment of St. Paul's advent within the Christian camp this picture of joyous evangelistic triumph is clouded over. Disunion

appears within the heart of the Church. Even the irenical Book of Acts cannot pass over Paul's differences with the other apostles on the subject of his preaching. The great message of Jesus had been, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The preaching of the eleven is a repetition of this, with the additional declaration that Jesus himself, whose resurrection had proved him to be the Messiah, will return shortly to inaugurate this kingdom. For instance, St. Peter, preaching to the people at Solomon's porch, says: "Repent ye . . . that your sins may be blotted out, that so there may come seasons of refreshing from the presence of the Lord; and that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus; whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things . . . unto you first God, having raised up his servant, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities" (Acts iii. 19-21, 26). In what respect does this Christ whom the eleven preached differ from the Christ of Paul? Paul himself informs us. The Christ of the eleven is "the Christ after the flesh," whom the apostle has determined to know no more (2 Cor. v. 16). The Christ of Paul is the pre-existing king, through whom all things were created (Col. i. 16 f.; Phil. ii. 6 ff.). "In him," says the apostle, "we have our redemption" (Col. i. 14); "we are justified by his blood" (Rom. v. 9); he is the "Lord" (κύριος Rom. x. 9), and the condition of salvation is that one confesses his lordship and his resurrection. Such confession enables men to appropriate the salvation which the sufferings of Jesus accomplished. This appropriation is made through baptism, which is not merely a rite of purification or

a means of acquiring the gift of the Spirit, but which identifies the believer with Jesus. Thus, just as the mystic of the pagan cults identified himself with his redeemer-god by various rites, like the blood-baptism or the assumption of the heavenly robe and other emblems of deity, so the Christian, according to St. Paul, is identified with Christ: "We were buried with him through baptism unto death" (Rom. vi. 4), and "raised with him through faith in the working of God" (Col. ii. 12), says the apostle. A comparison of this teaching with that of Jesus, as it appears in the lowest strata of the Synoptic Gospels and of Acts, suggests adequate reasons for any differences of opinion which the New Testament proves to have existed between St. Paul and the eleven. It also partly explains the Jews' dislike of Pauline Christianity. The Christ whom the eleven preached was simply a Jewish Messiah. His sufferings are not held up by them as bringing salvation to men, but as the culmination of a series of wicked persecutions of God's prophets (Acts ii. 23; vii. 52). The Christ whom St. Paul preached, while starting from the same plane, became a being who fulfilled all that had been conceived of the Logos in the Hermetic literature, and of the saviour-gods of the Mystery Cults. Dr. Sanday speaks of this contribution to christology in these words: "The title 'Son of God,' though literally and strictly meant, was used by the first disciples in a way that was naïve and unreflective. St. Paul evidently dwelt upon it, and pressed its full metaphysical meaning. He had clearly satisfied himself that the manifestations of Christ's divine lordship required nothing short of this. And then, as we might expect, he went on to make use of other terms that his

speculative training naturally suggested to illustrate and carry home the same fundamental idea." The course of development of this christology in the Early Church is extremely difficult to trace, for primary and secondary documents have been combined and the whole has been worked over by redactors and editors. But the beginning of the process—the conception of Jesus as a Jewish Messiah, and the end—the conception of him as a Redeemer-God, still stand in striking contrast in the New Testament.

The new christology was the inevitable result of the spread of the Christian message among people of that religious outlook which prevailed in the Empire at the time. Had not Christianity been able thus to adapt itself, doubtless it would have perished as a mere evanescent sect of Judaism.

CHAPTER XVI

THE MYSTERIES OF THE EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH

History of the Development of the Eucharist.

THE early history of the eucharist affords an instructive example of the influence of pagan ideas upon Christianity. The course of the development of this rite was not uniform. It differed considerably in different localities. The evidence shows that in Jewish-Christian circles the eucharist retained the features of a fraternal meal long after it had become the "eucharistic sacrifice," the "mystery" which provided the medicine of immortality (φάρμακον ἀθανασίας) to which Gentile converts had been accustomed in their pre-conversion days. The unique prominence which is assigned to the eucharist by a large section of the Christian Church would lead an investigator, who had no previous knowledge of Christianity, to expect to find this rite figuring with corresponding importance in the documents of the first generations of Christians. But this is far from being the case. Each of the Four Gospels records the Last Supper; and, because it was the last, it inevitably acquired an unequalled measure of interest. But the interpretation of this meal is not the same, even among the Synoptics. The Fourth Gospel says nothing about the institution of any rite by Jesus. It places the Supper a day earlier than do the other three gospels; and it mentions the "words of insti-

tution " in an entirely different connection. The Jerusalem Church celebrated a common meal which bears little resemblance to the sacrament of Ignatius or Justin. St. Paul speaks of the rite only in 1 Corinthians. He claims to have received a special revelation about it,¹ and his views upon its significance and origin are in accord with those of the Synoptic Gospels rather than with those of Acts. The author of Hebrews either does not mention the rite, or—as will be shown later—if he does, he perhaps deprecates those views of it which were then becoming the orthodox doctrine. 1 Clement says nothing about its institution by Christ, nor of any relation between the Lord's death and the salvation of believers. The Didache reveals a very similar attitude. It would appear that, at the beginning of the second century A.D., there were as great diversities of opinion about the significance of the meal which was celebrated by Christians as there are to-day. Considerations of this kind substantiate the truth of Mr. Gardner's words that "there is no proof, apart from the fact that the rite was perpetuated, that the founder of Christianity ever intended to establish it."² We will now investigate the evidence in more detail.

The Synoptic Gospels represent the Last Supper as taking place when the Passover was sacrificed; *i.e.* it was a veritable passover supper. It is, however, noteworthy that the bread is not described as "unleavened," the procedure is not in accordance with passover practice, and there is no indication that a lamb formed part of the meal. Had the usual passover victim been present, it can hardly be doubted that the sacrificed

¹ *Vide* pp. 202, 203.

² *Religious Experience of St. Paul*, p. 114.

lamb, and not the broken bread, would have been chosen by Christ as the symbol of his death. This parallelism is so suitable that it was soon recognized by the Christian Church (*cf.* 1 Cor. v. 7 f.). We may therefore conclude that the Fourth Gospel is right in assigning the date of the Lord's Supper to the fourteenth instead of to the fifteenth Nizan. St. Luke's text indicates a knowledge of the "fourteenth Nizan" tradition in xxii. 15, 16: "With desire have I desired to eat this passover with you before I suffer; for I say unto you that I will not eat it until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God." These words imply that Jesus now perceives that the crisis will eventuate before the day of Passover comes. Similar indications of the tradition of the earlier day are found in Mark xiv. 1, 2 ("Not on the feast day"), and in Matt. xxvii. 62. However, the general impression which is conveyed to the reader by the account of the first three gospels is that the Last Supper is a passover meal. The inference from this is that before A.D. 70—the terminus *ad quem* for Mark—the eucharist was regarded as a Christian "passover." The origin of this idea can be traced perhaps to Christ's warning against leaven, and to Paul's words, "Christ our passover is sacrificed for us. . . ." In point of fact, however, the apostle does not, in this passage, refer to the eucharist, and there is nothing to show that he regarded the Last Supper as taking place on Passover night. In other respects Mark's account appears to be based on a tradition of the Last Supper interpreted according to the practice which prevailed in the Pauline Churches. An historic, as opposed to a doctrinal reason for the Synoptists' identification of the Last Supper with the Passover meal is given by Spitta. Spitta conjectures that,

because the disciples were unable to keep the Passover on 15th Nizan, owing to the arrest of Jesus the night before, they celebrated it on the 14th of the following month, in accordance with Num. ix. 9 ff. When the disciples were reunited for this purpose at Jerusalem, after the appearance of Jesus in Galilee, the meal acquired for them a new significance. This significance was perhaps emphasized by another appearance of Jesus as they sat at meat.¹

To return to the synoptic account of the Last Supper: an incident of the evening which is recorded by each of the three gospels, and of which the genuineness is confirmed by every mark of intrinsic probability, is the eschatological affirmation of Jesus, "I will not henceforth drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God shall come" (*cf.* Luke xxii. 18; Mark xiv. 25; Matt. xxvi. 29). These words express the idea of the Messianic banquet; moreover, they represent a point of view which expected victory not death, or, at any rate, in which death was a minor incident completely overshadowed by the imminence of the kingdom of the Messiah. It is not likely that such a saying would be ascribed to Jesus after the crucifixion, if he had not actually spoken it.

As far as the "words of institution" are concerned, the following facts are to be noted. Verses 19 and 20 of Luke xxii. are not found in the western text² (D, a, ff. i. and c). As they stand they present many difficulties (*cf.* Plummer, *St. Luke*, pp. 494, 495; West-

¹ *Cf.* "Die Urchristlichen Traditionen über Ursprung und Sinn des Abendmahls," pp. 291 f.

² Luke xxii. 19, 20, "And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he brake and gave to them, saying, 'This is my body which is given for you, this do in remembrance of me.' And the cup likewise after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.'"

cott and Hort, *New Testament*, Appendix, pp. 63, 64). Westcott and Hort regard the verses as a "Western non-interpolation," and after a review of the evidence, they conclude: "These difficulties, added to the suspicious coincidence with 1 Cor. xi. 24, . . . leave no moral doubt that the words in question were absent from the original text of Luke." (p. 64*b*). Hence St. Paul is the only direct witness for the command to repeat the supper as a commemorative rite. Further, the expressions, "This is my body" . . . "This is my blood," in Matthew and Mark are the same as the words of Paul in his account of the institution, and are not to be found in Luke except in the doubtful verses 19 and 20. Moreover, these utterances are not conceived from the same perspective as that which speaks of drinking wine in the kingdom of heaven—and the latter statement must, as we have seen, be regarded as in the highest degree authentic.¹ Again, the expressions "of the covenant" (Matt. xxvi. 28; Mark xiv. 24) and ". . . which is given for you . . . which is poured out for you" (Luke xxii. 19, 20; Mark xiv. 24), are omitted from the texts of most modern editors, such as B. Weiss, Westcott and Hort, Swete (*St. Mark*). The words accompanying the "cup of the covenant"—as opposed to those accompanying the eschatological cup—have been regarded as unauthentic because (*a*) the rite was called the "breaking of bread"; (*b*) wine never appears in post-resurrection meals, nor in John vi.; (*c*) their unauthenticity would account for the uncertainty which prevails with regard to the contents of the cup in the primitive eucharist.²

¹ Cf. Loisy, *Évangiles Synoptiques*, ii. p. 539.

² Cf. W. Brandt, *Die evangelische Geschichte und der Ursprung des Christenthums*, p. 293.

The conclusion to which such criticism points is confirmed by a consideration of the fact that the ideas underlying the words of institution are absolutely non-Jewish. The conception of establishing a covenant by drinking blood was widely spread, but it was pagan. The thought of eating Jesus' flesh, though based upon notions which were equally primitive,¹ would have been utterly abhorrent to a Jew—indeed, not only to Jews, for even the pagan Porphyry, speaking of the words in John vi. 53, says: "Is it not then bestial and absurd . . . for a man to eat human flesh and drink the blood of his fellow-tribesman . . . and win thereby life eternal . . . for even although it was meant to be taken in a more mystical or allegorical (and therefore profitable) sense, still the mere sound of the words upon the ear grates inevitably upon the soul, and makes it rebel against the loathsomeness of the saying? . . ." ² It is difficult to credit Porphyry with a greater sensitiveness than Jesus in such a matter; especially as the ideas involved are pagan and not Jewish.

The source from which this pagan element entered the gospel narrative will shortly appear. But, before passing on, we may note that any sacramental significance of the Last Supper, which is suggested by the synoptic account, is not in harmony with the general teaching of Christ. According to him, salvation is dependent upon repentance of heart. It was not to be gained by the performance of any particular act, and there is nothing to indicate that, on the night of the betrayal, his ideas underwent a complete transformation. Indeed, there is evidence to the contrary; for the early chapters of Acts are silent about any celebration of the sacramental meal which the

¹ Cf. chap. iii.

² *Mac. Magnes*, iii. xv.

Synoptics represent Jesus as having instituted. From such passages as Acts ii. 42, 46, etc., we see that the first Christians at Jerusalem lived a communal life in which the "breaking of bread" was a prominent feature. If this breaking of bread was the eucharist—and Acts knows of no other sacred meal—then the earliest form in which this rite was celebrated was that of a communal expression of fellowship on the part of those who had received the Holy Spirit and who were awaiting the return of Jesus as Messiah and his establishment of the Kingdom of God. The elements themselves in no way symbolized the presence of the immortal Christ.

The witness of the Fourth Gospel is of the same tenor, as far as the sacramental nature of the Last Supper is concerned; though, as regards the inauguration of God's kingdom, literal interpretations have given place almost entirely to spiritual and metaphorical. The author omits any reference to the institution of the eucharist. This cannot be explained by saying that the writer's purpose was "avowedly one of selection," for he uses the expressions "eating Christ's flesh" and "drinking Christ's blood" in an entirely different connection, and with a significance which, as he is at pains to emphasize (chap. vi.), is allegorical and spiritual. For him they form no part of an organized rite. He must have been aware of the existence of the eucharist, but he appears to have regarded the manner in which it was celebrated as a too literal and material expression of spiritual ideas. He evidently did not believe that it had been instituted by Christ, on the night of his betrayal, as the Christians' chief means of grace.

We shall come back to the testimony of the Johanne literature subsequently. The witness of St. Paul, the first in point of time, must now be considered. In three passages he refers to the Lord's Supper : 1 Cor. x. 1-4 ; 1 Cor. x. 14-32 ; 1 Cor. xi. 17-34.

The first of these references, 1 Cor. x. 1-4, introduces a warning to the Corinthians, taken from Old Testament history. The experience of the chosen people in the desert teaches that the mere partaking of "spiritual" food and drink does not, apart from moral considerations, assure salvation. No doubt the Corinthians had been inclined, when they were sectaries of the Mystery Cults in their pre-Christian days, to trust to the sacramentary initiations which these cults provided. As a consequence, they now regarded Christian Baptism and the celebration of the Last Supper as rites which, like the Mystery rites, worked *ex opere operato*. 1 Cor. x. is interesting, not only as an indication of this tendency of pagan converts, but also as an illustration of St. Paul's ability to find, in the Old Testament, parallels to, and justifications of, his teaching. The passage reveals the same Hellenic allegorizing spirit which pervades Wisdom x. 13 f. Paul seems to regard the eucharist as fulfilling a prophetic type of union with God, and as therefore occupying a central place in the Christian scheme of salvation.

1 Cor. x. 14-20 shows us that the Christian religious meal was not the only one at Corinth. The communities which worshipped pagan deities ("devils") also celebrated such meals ; and Paul appears to regard them as having an effect similar in kind to that of the Christian eucharist. To participate in the latter is, St. Paul asserts, to "share the table of the Lord."

To participate in the former is to "share the table of devils" (1 Cor. x. 21). The *κοινωνία* (A.V. "communion"), mentioned in verse 16, is described as a sharing of the *body and blood* of Christ, and cannot therefore be equivalent to a communion with Christ in spirit. It is a sharing of the body and blood of Christ which was sacrificed on the Cross. Verse 17 is probably an instance of Paul's tendency to "go off at a word," for in this verse the word "body" is employed in the mystical sense as meaning the Christian Church. It cannot have this significance in verse 16, since there it is parallel to "blood," a word which the apostle always uses literally. Verse 18 therefore follows verse 16 in the argument, and it explains the sequence of St. Paul's thought. In vv. 14-16 the Christian meal has been compared with the sacred meals of the heathen. In verse 18 Paul appeals to the Jewish custom of sharing the flesh of the sacrifices between the deity and his worshippers. This custom (the apostle would say), substantiates the truth of the ideas which he and the Corinthians hold in common about the general significance of sacred meals. The words "participation in the altar," refer to the use which prevailed among the Jews of participating in the altar (table) which was prepared for the deity.¹ In Judaism the idea that such participation was a physical means of realizing communion with God had largely been replaced by the conception of sacrifice as an act of homage, fidelity, and purification. But, as we have seen (chap. iii.), the former was a primitive conception of sacrifice, and it was well known to the Greeks. Lietzmann, in his

¹ Cf. Ezekiel xlv. 15, 16 : "They shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord God ; they shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me. . . ."

commentary on 1 Cor. (p. 124), quotes examples of this belief that the god shared the food with his worshippers; e.g. from *Pap. Oxy.*, i. 110: "Chairemon invites you to dinner at the table of the lord Serapis in the Serapæum to-morrow. . . ." St. Paul, in verses 19-22, continues the parallelism between the sacred meal of the pagans and the Christians' "supper." Christ is likened to a god who is jealous because his worshippers forsake his table for those of other deities. The eucharistic elements are compared with the offerings which were eaten at pagan sacrificial meals. Thus the "supper of the Lord" is related to the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross (v. 16) in the same way as the sacred meals of the heathen are related to the slaughtered victims which were partaken of at these feasts. Hence Christ is looked upon both as the sacrifice and as the God; a conception which is precisely similar to that which prevailed in Mystery Cults like that of Dionysos and of Osiris. This parallelism between Christianity and the Mystery Religions is fundamental in Pauline theology.

In St. Paul's third reference to the Last Supper (1 Cor. xi. 17-34), he writes (v. 23): 'Εγὼ γὰρ παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ Κυρίου . . . ὅτι Commenting upon this, Professor H. A. A. Kennedy, says: "Scientific exegesis rightly rejects the interpretation of . . . a special revelation." But to understand the words as implying a special revelation seems the natural way of interpreting them. Bousset, Godet, Gardner, Heitmüller, Lietzmann, Loisy, Reitzenstein, are all in favour of it.¹

¹ Most critics who deny that St. Paul means that he had received direct information from the glorified Christ with regard to the eucharist, maintain, with Clemen, that, if the apostle had meant this, "denn würde dann wohl nicht ἀπὸ, sondern παρὰ dastehen" (*op. cit.*, p. 17). But, as Loisy remarks, "on peut croire que l'apôtre n'y a pas mis tant de subtilité. Dans cette hypothèse, Paul aurait été informé au sujet de la cène, et non par le Seigneur,

The view that a personal revelation is meant is supported by the emphatic position of Ἐγώ, and by St. Paul's strong assertions in Gal. i. that he had received his gospel, of which the eucharist was an integral part, 'neither from man, nor by teaching, but by revelation of Jesus Christ.' (Gal. i. 12). The apostle was, we know, guided to momentous decisions by visions; for instance, his conversion, and his determination to carry his gospel to Europe. Clemen completely fails to comprehend the outlook of a πνευματικός, when he says that Paul would have compared his vision concerning the eucharist with the tradition of the Eleven before he believed it.¹ We conclude, therefore, that the Apostle means what the words state, that he received the doctrine of the Lord's Supper from Christ. This source of St. Paul's teaching explains his special interpretation of the fraternal meal which he found already being celebrated by Palestinian Christians. It was quite natural that some of the converts at Corinth should have at first regarded the Christian eucharist as a meal similar to those which they were accustomed to celebrate in commemoration of dead heroes or gods. These meals were often mere occasions for feasting, and doubtless would tend to give rise to such excesses as are mentioned in 1 Cor. xi. 17-22. St. Paul disabuses the Corinthians' minds of this light conception of the Lord's Supper. A powerful force is inherent in the elements, and, if the latter are taken in an unworthy manner (ἀναξίως), this force is in danger of causing serious bodily harm and even death. It had already done so to some at Corinth (1 Cor. xi.

et il ne s'agirait pas d'une chose que les anciens apôtres auraient apprise du Christ, mais d'une chose dont ils auraient été témoins." (*Les Mystères Païens*, p. 282 n.)

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 18.

30). Moral preparation, together with a realization that the elements represent the body and blood of the sacrificed Christ, are essential for a right participation, and will render the eucharist a remembrance of Christ's death and a means of appropriating the benefits that flow therefrom. Paul cannot be said to teach a literal transformation of the elements into Christ's body and blood. He does not mean this, any more than he means that the rock from which the Israelites drank was actually Christ (1 Cor. x. 4). But he certainly conceives participation in the elements as being something more than a symbolic expression of the spiritual union and strengthening which Christ imparts to his followers. The act can become, through moral preparation and faith, a means of ensuring union with the crucified Saviour. It is this conception which differentiates the original "Breaking of Bread" in the Palestinian Church from the "Eucharist" at Corinth. The meal of the first Jewish Christians was not a way of effecting union with Christ. Paul's argument from pagan sacrifices shows that he accepted their theory, and indicates that, as Oscar Holtzmann says, in Paul's conception of the Lord's Supper we have "A piece of paganism" (*Ein Stück Heidentum*).¹ Reitzenstein compares the apostle's doctrine, which emphasizes the exhortation to repeat the rite as a remembrance, with a magic text of Pauline times in which Osiris gives to Isis and Horus his blood to drink in a glass of wine, in order that they should not forget him, but should seek him with passionate mourning until he was restored to life and united with them again.² The comparison at least shows how

¹ *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 1904, p. 107.

² *H.M.R.*, p. 56, and cf. further examples, pp. 244, 245.

readily the primitive idea of actually absorbing the deity would attach itself to Paul's language. We may, without doubt, regard the apostle himself as a mystic, who would never have conceived the "words of institution" in their plain, literal, and material sense. He does, however, believe that the pagan sacrifices were a means of establishing union with the "demons" to whom they were offered and in whose name they were eaten. And this theory—union with the deity by eating the sacrificial elements—St. Paul is the first to introduce into Christianity, and to apply to the Lord's Supper.

Turning now to the evidence of the epistle to the Hebrews, we should certainly expect, if the author held the same conception of the eucharist as did Paul, to find this rite occupying a prominent place; for the sacrifice of Christ is the central theme of this epistle. Actually the "Lord's Supper" seems never to be mentioned. In Heb. vi. 1, 2 the author enumerates the "first principles" (θεμελίαι) of Christ, namely repentance, faith, baptism, the laying on of hands, the resurrection, and judgment; and he proposes to "press on unto perfection." But the eucharist is not definitely referred to, either as a "first principle" or as a rite for full-grown Christians. The only two possible allusions to it are in x. 29 and in xiii. 10. The first passage, x. 29, speaks of the heinous offence of the man who treats the "blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified as an unholy thing." It is almost certain that this expression "blood of the covenant" refers not to any eucharistic formula but to the blood of Christ sacrificed upon the Cross. In chapter xiii. 10 we find these words: "We have an altar whereof they

have no right to eat that serve the tabernacle." Some have seen here a reference to the Jewish tabernacle and to its priests as being ineligible to participate in the Christian eucharist. But, as M. Jean Réville¹ and M. Goguel² remark, the expression "they who serve the tabernacle" (οἱ τῇ σκηνῇ λατρεύοντες) cannot refer to the priests and Levites, "qui n'avaient pas le moindre désir de participer à l'eucharistie." The reference is therefore to the Christian temple³ and to the Christians who worship there.⁴ This passage, xiii. 10, accordingly states that the Christians have an altar, but that they have no right to eat of the sacrifice offered thereon. Oscar Holtzmann considers that Heb. xiii. 7-17 is a polemic against a sacramental conception of the eucharist. His theory, which appeared in an article in the *Z.N.T.W.*, 1909, pp. 251-260, entitled "Der Hebräerbrief und das Abendmahl," is as follows: Verses 9-16 are a warning against strange doctrines which are not found in the teaching of the community's first leaders (v. 7), and which "change" Christ (v. 8). The heart should be established by grace and not by meats, *i.e.* the heart should attain strength through faith in the grace of God; and not through sacred meals. "We have here," says Holtzmann, "clearly the idea of a sacramental meal; . . ." the reference of the words to the eucharistic elements is absolutely certain because the Last Supper is, in the whole history of Christianity, the only meal which is regarded as conferring "strength of heart." Christians did not expect strength from the heathen feasts of sacrifice, while the sacrifices of the Jews had no such object in

¹ *Les Origines de L'Eucharistie*, p. 70.

² *L'Eucharistie*, p. 218.

³ Cf. ix. 8, where the Jewish temple is spoken of as "the first tabernacle."

⁴ Cf. ix. 14, xii. 28, where λατρεύοντες is used of Christians.

view. Verses 10 and 11 confirm the references to the Lord's Supper. Verse 10 refers to the altar on which Jesus offered himself as a redemptive sacrifice (*cf.* v. 12), and of such a sacrifice the Jews never ate the flesh. The sacrifice which Christians should offer is one of "praise and thanksgiving" (v. 15). Holtzmann, continues: "If we look at the whole epistle, we see how the passage on the Lord's Supper came naturally at the end of the author's train of ideas. The epistle treats of the redemption and the sacrifice of Jesus. All through, and again at the end, the reception of the proffered salvation is urged. As the Last Supper was regarded by the community to whom the epistle was addressed as the chief means of salvation, the author was bound to express himself with regard to it. He does so, and denies absolutely any sacramental significance to the Christian meal." The article concludes: "We owe the preservation of this important document only to the fact that it was written in a difficult liturgical language, and that men soon ceased to understand that the body of Christ was not eaten in the oldest community." Thus, this "early protest against the realistic sacramental view of the Lord's Supper, which sought to base its efficacy upon conceptions of communion popular among the pagan Mysteries,"¹ was unavailing.

The argument from silence is proverbially dangerous. For instance, it might be urged that it was only the disorders at Corinth and the question of eating idol sacrifices, which caused Paul to make any mention of the eucharist. This is true; and we must also remember that the New Testament writings are largely

¹ Cf. Moffatt, *Introduction to Literature of New Testament*, p. 455.

“ tracts for the times ” rather than expositions of doctrine. But, even taking these facts into consideration, the general absence of reference to the eucharist in the New Testament is remarkable, if this rite was ever intended to be the “ central service,” the chief means of grace for the Christian Church. A noteworthy example of silence with regard to the Last Supper occurs in Eph. iv. 4 f. The writer is speaking of the marks of unity which distinguish Christianity. He says : “ There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also ye were called with one hope of your calling ; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all. . . . ” The eucharist is not mentioned ; and yet we know that, by St. Paul (1 Cor. x. 17), and by the Palestinian Christians (Didache ix. 4, etc.), this rite was specially held to be a symbol of the Church’s unity. Must we infer that the author’s silence about it represents another protest against the increasing importance which was attached by some Christians to their sacred meal ?

We have already spoken of the tendency of the Fourth Gospel to spiritualize the Pauline teaching about the Last Supper, and of the indications that this gospel did not regard the rite as having been instituted by Jesus on the night of his betrayal (p. 199). The principal allusion to the eucharist in the other Johannine writings is 1 John v. 6. Here the author writes : “ This is he that came by Water and Blood, even Jesus Christ ; not in water only, but in water and in blood ; and the Spirit is the witness, because the Spirit is the Truth.” M. Goguel points out ¹ the probability that this passage is not primarily anti-docetic, but refers to the rites of

¹ *L'Eucharistie*, pp. 210 ff.

baptism and the eucharist. The emphasis on the latter rite perhaps shows that the Christians of Asia Minor were inclined to neglect it. The same writer also suggests that, in the reference to the Spirit, "peut-être l'auteur fait allusion au fait que, d'après lui, la communion n'a pas été instituée du vivant de Jésus, mais qu'elle est née dans l'église sous l'influence de l'esprit." The significance attaching to the Communion in Johannine circles is apparent from a study of the Fourth Gospel, and it would partly account for pagan converts' neglect of the rite. In this gospel the exhortation to mutual love, which is symbolized by the act of feet-washing, occupies a position similar to that of the institution of the eucharist in the synoptic and Pauline accounts. The correspondence between the sacerdotal prayer of Jesus recorded in John xvii. and the eucharistic prayers in the Didache shows that these chapters in the Fourth Gospel were regarded by some Christians as the author's substitution for the record of the Synoptists and of Paul. The words addressed to Peter, "He that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet" (John xiii. 10), taken in conjunction with the mention of two sacraments (1 John v. 6), appear to indicate that the Johannine school taught that the eucharist—a fraternal meal, shared in a spirit of mutual love—maintained the initial cleansing that had been conferred by baptism. The emphasis which is laid on love in connection with this sacred meal, in the Johannine writings, shows that the rite was not, as with Paul, primarily intended to be a means of union with Christ crucified by eating the consecrated elements, but that it was a means of spiritual union with Christ glorified, *i.e.* with the Logos, by sharing the same spirit of service.

The Epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthians, written *c.* A.D. 95, contributes some additional information to our knowledge of the early history of the eucharist. The object of the epistle was to heal the divisions which had arisen at Corinth on the subject of ecclesiastical authority. A situation is revealed in which the laity are becoming subordinated to the presbyters, and a certain section of the former are resenting it. Clement supports the ecclesiastical view of apostolic succession. "We cannot," he says (1 Cor. xix. 18), "think that those may be justly thrown out of their ministry, who either were appointed by them (*i.e.* the apostles), or afterwards chosen by other eminent men, with the consent of the whole Church." And again, in xvii. 25 ff., "Let us consider those who fight under our earthly governors. How orderly, how readily, and with what exact obedience they perform those things that are commanded them. All are not generals nor colonels nor captains, . . . but every one in his respective rank does that which is commanded him by the king; and those who have authority over him." In chapter xviii., after a long quotation from the Book of Job, Clement writes as follows: "It behoves us to do all things in order, whatsoever our Lord has commanded us to do. And particularly that we perform our offerings and service (*προσφορὰς καὶ λειτουργίας*) to God, at their appointed seasons; for these He has commanded to be done not rashly nor disorderly, but at certain determined times and hours. And therefore He has ordained by His supreme will and authority, both where, and by what persons, they are to be performed. That so, all things being piously done unto all well-pleasing, they may be acceptable unto Him. They,

therefore, that make their offerings at the appointed times are happy and accepted ; because that, obeying the commandment of the Lord, they are free from sin. And the same care must be taken of the persons that minister unto him . . .”—here follows a long example from the Levitical priesthood, and, in verse 19, Clement continues : “ Let every one of you therefore, brethren, bless God in his proper station, with a good conscience, and with all gravity, not exceeding the rule of his service that is appointed unto him.” A second example is adduced from the Old Testament, and the chapter concludes with these words : “ Consider, brethren, that by how much the better is the knowledge God hath vouchsafed to us, by so much is the danger greater to which we are exposed.”

A study of these verses leads to the conclusion that the eucharist, which Clement calls a *προσφορά*—probably influenced by Old Testament parallelism—was sometimes celebrated in the Corinthian Church by private persons and in private places. Clement argues on behalf of its celebration only by certain people and in certain places. He regards it as an ecclesiastical rite, and not as a private meal. It is remarkable that no definite statement is made as to its institution by Christ, and that no theory as to its efficacy is advanced. Either would have added solemnity to the rite, and would thus have strengthened Clement’s argument that its celebration was not merely a matter which any private individual might undertake.

The teaching of the *Didache* is of particular interest because it almost certainly preserves the views held by the Palestinian Church at the beginning of the

second century A.D. In chapter ix. a fixed liturgical form for use at the eucharist is given. It runs thus : " We thank thee, our Father, for the holy vine of Thy Son David, which was made known to us through Jesus the Son. To Thee be glory for ever. We thank Thee, Our Father, for the life and knowledge which were made known to us through Jesus the Son. To Thee be glory for ever. As these fragments were once scattered over the hills and became gathered into one, so let Thy Church be gathered together from the corners of the earth into Thy Kingdom. For Thine is the Glory and the Power through Jesus Christ for ever." In chapter x. some very similar prayers are mentioned. This " liturgy " bears the closest resemblance to the Jewish prayers and benedictions uttered over the elements which were consumed on their feast days and sabbaths. It is clear that the author was aiming at the establishment of a fixed form of prayer at the eucharist. The only exception is in the case of prophets, who, at the end of chapter x., are mentioned as being permitted " to return thanks how they wish." In chapter ix. 5 we find the exhortation : " Let none eat or drink of your eucharist unless they have been baptized in the name of the Lord." The legitimate inference is that, in Palestine up to the beginning of the second century, the eucharist was a real meal, at which no fixed liturgy was used, and to which even pagans might be admitted. It was not an act done in obedience to Christ's command, nor was it regarded—as it is in Paul's teaching—as a partaking of Christ's body and blood. There is, accordingly, a close likeness between the eucharist which is mentioned in the Didache and the " Breaking of Bread," which figures in the early chapters of Acts.

In chapter xiv. a public eucharist is spoken of in the following terms : " On Sunday meet together to break the bread and to give thanks. First confess your sins that your sacrifice may be pure. Whoso has a quarrel with his brother let him not meet together with you before they are reconciled, that your sacrifices may not be profaned ; for it is of this that the Lord said : ' There must be offered at all times and in every place a pure sacrifice, for I am a great King, saith the Lord, and my name is wonderful among the Gentiles ' " (*cf.* Mal. i. 11). Here we have an ecclesiastical rite termed *θυσία* — no doubt after Matt. v. 23, 24—and apparently compared with Jewish sacrifices. There is, however, no mention of the institution of the rite by Jesus, nor of the mystical nature of the elements. Apparently the ecclesiastical eucharist and the private meal continued to exist side by side in Palestine *c.* A.D. 100. It is to be noted that the breaking of bread is regarded, in the eucharistic prayers of the Didache, not only as the occasion for commemorating the benefits received by the Church from Christ, but also as the time for invoking future blessings. Under the influence of current pagan views as to the significance of special meals, it is an easy step from this to that conception which looked upon the eucharist as the peculiar means of conveying and appropriating such blessings.

The views of Ignatius on the eucharist find definite statement in the seven epistles bearing his name which are generally held to be authentic. Ignatius was a mediocre, unimaginative thinker ; but he was a strong churchman, and his influence in establishing the episcopate in its position of pre-eminence was

considerable. According to Ignatius, the eucharist was a means of realizing the unity of the Church. "Let it be your care," he says, "to come more fully together, to the praise and glory of God. For when ye meet fully together in the same place, the powers of the devil are destroyed and his mischief is destroyed by the unity of their faith" (Eph. iii. 11). "Let it be your endeavour to partake all of the same holy eucharist. For there is but one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ; and one cup in the unity of his blood, one altar; as also there is one bishop . . . (Philad. i. 10-12). Private celebrations are condemned in words which indicate that they were practised: "Let no man deceive himself; if a man be not within the altar, he is deprived of the bread of God. For if the prayer of one or two be of such force as we are told, how much more powerful shall that of the bishop and the whole Church be?" (Eph. ii. 2). The ideal is—as Ignatius writes to the same Church (Eph. iv. 16)—"that ye all come together in common in one place, and in one Jesus Christ, who was of the race of David according to the flesh; the son of man, and Son of God. Obeying your bishop and the presbyters with our entire affection; breaking one and the same bread which (*ὅς*—so Zahn and Lightfoot), is the medicine of immortality (*φάρμακον ἀθανασίας*), our antidote that we should not die, but live for ever in Jesus Christ." In writing to the Romans, who, he feared, would intervene to prevent his martyrdom, Ignatius says: "I take no pleasure in the food of corruption, nor in the pleasures of this life. I desire the bread of God, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, of the seed of David; and the drink that I long for is his blood, which is incorruptible love" (Rom. iii. 4, 5). In his epistle to

the Smyrneans (ii. 16), Ignatius complains of heretics "who abstain from the eucharist and the prayers, because they do not confess that the eucharist is the flesh of our Saviour Jesus Christ, which suffered for our sins, and which the Father, of his goodness, raised again from the dead." Ignatius could hardly have used more direct expressions if he had deliberately intended to deny the assertion of the Fourth Gospel, "it is the Spirit that quickeneth, the flesh profiteth nothing." Harnack not unfairly remarks that, "in Ignatius, the mysteries had already dragged down and engulfed the whole body of intelligent theology."¹

The testimony of Justin Martyr (*Apol.* lxxv. 3-5), shows that a celebration of the eucharist immediately followed baptism. The procedure indicates a realization of the situation at which Ignatius aimed. In chapter lxxvi. the rite is explained in these words: "This food is called the eucharist. None can share it but he who believes that our teaching is the truth, who has been bathed by the baptism of pardon from sin and the new birth, and who lives according to Christ's precepts. We do not hold these as common bread and drink, but, just as our Saviour Christ was incarnate by the action of the divine Logos from flesh and blood for our salvation, so we maintain that the food, upon which the thanksgiving has been said following a form of prayer given by Him and from which our flesh and blood feed by absorbing it, is the flesh and blood of Jesus incarnate." (lxxvi. 2). Justin then adds an account of Jesus' institution of the eucharist. A weekly celebration is similarly described in chapter lxxvii. In the *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*,

¹ *Expansion of Christianity*, i. p. 289.

the Last Supper is described as a holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, and a remembrance of Christ's death (*cf.* chaps. xli., lxx., cxvii.). Justin's conceptions appear, in this work, almost free from their pagan colouring in order to render them more acceptable to the Jews. But in the eucharist of Justin nearly every conception of a sacred meal, whether Jewish or pagan, may be found.

A remarkable feature about the early history of the eucharist is the rapidity with which the conception of the rite reverted from lofty to primitive ideas. Viewed by the earliest Christian community as a purely symbolic act, it is regarded, even by St. Paul, as a sacrament, *i.e.* the elements are considered to be charged with a power which assists in accomplishing the desired end. At the beginning of the second century the eucharist is looked upon, outside Palestinian Christian circles, as pure magic, *i.e.* the elements are believed to work their effect *ex opere operato*. This belief does not necessarily imply an unethical conception of the eucharist, but it easily comes to mean this in the minds of perhaps the majority of men. It is an indication of the religious genius of the Jews that their conception of sacred meals had succeeded in developing from this primitive magic type. As we have seen in Chap. III., all primitive sacred feasts were originally connected with sacrifice, and they had a magic, or, at least, a sacramental significance. Under the Deuteronomic law of the central sanctuary, sacrifices had ceased, except for those Jews who were able to present themselves at the Temple at Jerusalem. But the sacred meals which had accompanied sacrifice still continued. Josephus¹ mentions the "contri-

¹ *Ant.* 14. 10. 8.

butions for common suppers and holy festivals," which the Jews of the diaspora were accustomed to make. This enforced separation of the feasts from their primitive environment, together, no doubt, with the ethical teaching of the prophets, eventually transformed the sacred meals of Judaism into religious acts wherein prayer and thanksgiving predominated, and into symbolic anticipations of the great Messianic Banquet (*cf.* Enoch lxii. 4 *et al.*). Even the Passover meal, which originally contained primitive conceptions of sacrificial slaughter and feasting, had become chiefly a meal of remembrance, eaten in expectation of entering the Kingdom of the Messiah which was typified by the Promised Land (*cf.* Exod. xii. 42). The dignity and value of such symbolic acts are lost upon minds of lower religious development. These ask for some tangible assurance of real contact with the deity, and symbolism becomes degraded by them into magic. Admittedly, it is doubtful if the Christian Church would ever have made much headway in the pagan world if the fraternal and symbolic meal of remembrance, celebrated by the Jerusalem Church, had not been transformed by Paul into the sacramental means of grace, which pagan presuppositions demanded. There had to be a "table of the Lord," to replace the "table of demons." But the first step was retrograde, and the backward movement did not cease there. The celebration of the Lord's Supper was soon looked upon as an exact counterpart to the rites of the Mystery Religions, *i.e.* as a re-enactment of episodes in the divine drama which effected man's salvation. The elements themselves were termed "mysteries," and were regarded as possessing a magical power. This is the teaching of most of the

great leaders of the Church by the third century A.D. Cyprian, for instance,¹ relates how a small child, who, unknown to her parents, had eaten of a pagan sacrifice, afterwards took part in a eucharist. At the presence of the "Mysteries," the demon, which had entered her with the pagan sacrificial food, showed signs of discomfort, causing her to gnash her teeth and to refuse to partake of the wine. Nor was she able to retain that which was eventually forced between her lips, "in corpore atque ore violato eucharistia permanere non potuit, sanctificatus in Domini sanguine potus de pollutis visceribus erupit."

This incursion of magical ideas in the early Christian community's conception of the sacrament was almost inevitable as soon as Gentiles formed the preponderating element in the Church. For converted pagans still felt the need of satisfying their religious instincts according to the methods and practices in which they had been brought up. They did not, on becoming Christians, cease to experience a desire for material forms of expression of the unknown, the mysterious, and the inexplicable. On the contrary, they imagined that they had discovered these essentials in the Sacraments of Christianity, of which the rites of the pagan Mystery Cults were, they thought, spurious or inferior copies.

¹ *De Lapsis*, c. 25.

CHAPTER XVII

SURVEY OF THE FORMATIVE INFLUENCES UPON CHRISTIANITY

WHAT was the relative importance of Judaism, Greek philosophy, and the Greek and Oriental Mystery Religions as formative influences upon Christianity? The debt of Christianity to Judaism is, admittedly, so obvious that, down to the beginning of the present century, it obscured the contributions made by the other two. Within the last twenty years, however, attention has been centred upon the Mystery Religions. As a result, their formative influence in the development of Christianity has been given a very prominent place. Recently there has been a partial reaction.

As far as the effect of Judaism is concerned, one fact stands out as being of especial importance: the Jewish sacred books became the Scriptures of Christianity. This alone is sufficient to prove that the new religion regarded itself as the legitimate continuation, indeed as the consummation, of Judaism. Harnack comprises the debt of Christianity to Judaism under five heads: "Religious communities already formed; the help of materials (*i.e.* Old Testament and liturgy); the habit of regular worship, and the control of private life by religion; an impressive apologetic on the part of monotheism, historical teleology and ethics; the feeling that self-diffusion was a duty."¹ For some

¹ *Mission and Expansion of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 157.

of these advantages Christianity was, however, indebted to Greek philosophy and to the Mystery Religions. Monotheism was inculcated by Greek philosophy; and a keen missionary spirit prevailed among the contemporary Mystery Cults. But it is, perhaps, just to regard Judaism as the primary source of such benefits. Certainly the prophetic conviction of the moral personality of God, and the Psalmist's realization of the possibility of individual communion with Him, are two doctrines of the Jews' religion which passed over unchanged into the Early Church and became basic principles of Christianity. To this heritage from Israel must be added the part which the religious outlook of the Jewish Western diaspora played in freeing nascent Christianity from the circumscribing limits of nationalism and sectarianism.¹ The influence of Rabbinic Judaism is not so easy to estimate. Hillel's saying, "That which is to thee hateful do not to thy neighbour."² This is the whole law, the rest is commentary," has often been referred to as an anticipation of Christ's golden rule. But, as Dr. A. C. Headlam says, "In the other recorded sayings of Hillel and his school nothing ever reminds us that he had once had the intuition to see where the root of the law and morality lies."³ Mr. Montefiore maintains that Christian writers make too much of the fact that Hillel's statement of the golden rule is negative. He cites Hillel's saying, "Love mankind, and bring them to the Torah," as being "positive enough in all conscience."⁴ It is; but it is also perhaps less broad. However, Mr. Montefiore, in *Judaism and St. Paul*,

¹ Cf. Chapter VIII., p. 94 f.

² Cf. Tobit iv. 15.

³ *Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, p. 82.

⁴ Cf. *Beginnings of Christianity*, vol. i. p. 79.

draws a picture of the God of the Rabbinic Jews which wonderfully resembles the "heavenly Father" of Jesus. "The average Jewish believer held that God was the Father . . . of every Israelite . . ., that He heard every sincere prayer of all His human children. His throne was far off on high, but He was also very near; . . . He was great and awful, but He was also merciful and loving . . . (p. 26), . . . kindly and pitiful (p. 27). . . . He wants His children to be happy and good, and has provided them with a means by which happiness and goodness may be secured. This means is the Law (p. 28) . . . their religion was therefore happy and hopeful; happy in the performance within the limits of human frailty of the divine commands in this world, hopeful in the belief in the sure inheritance hereafter and the finer and purer beatitudes of the world to come (pp. 36, 37). . . . This world is God's world. The Israelite was to smell the rose and to rejoice in its perfume; to say and feel, 'Blessed art Thou, O Lord, who created fragrant plants.'" (p. 46). The same writer describes Judaism as "a religion of family life, not of celibate asceticism, of drastic punishment of the flesh . . . *without sacraments or mysteries. It knew of no rapid change from bad to good by any secret initiation or any second or higher birth*" (pp. 49-50). If this be a true picture, the influence of Rabbinic Judaism upon Jesus himself is considerably more than is usually inferred from the New Testament—and particularly from Pauline references to contemporary Israel. In any case, it may be claimed for Rabbinism that it played an important rôle in furnishing Paul and others with those exegetical methods of interpreting the Old Testament by which it was possible to represent the Jewish Scriptures as testifying to

the truth of Christianity. For instance, by these Rabbinic methods, passages of the Old Testament are used by St. Paul to prove the coming of Jesus, the condemnation of the Law, and the inclusion of the Gentiles, in a manner which—to modern minds—seems quite unconvincing, indeed sometimes totally illogical. Had not this method of exegesis been prevalent at the time, it is possible that Paul would have been constrained to treat the Old Testament as Marcion did the New Testament, or to have abandoned it altogether. Thus it may be that Rabbinism is largely responsible for the fact that Christianity was able to start as a religion which possessed a sacred and ancient book.

Influence of Græco-Roman Thought.

Bauer, over fifty years ago, endeavoured to prove that the Christian religion was the outcome, not of Judaism, but of Græco-Roman thought. In his book, *Christus und die Caesaren : der Ursprung des Christenthums aus dem römischen Griechentum*, he represented Christianity as an amalgam issuing from the crucible of the Alexandrian schools in the second century. It was compounded of Philonic Judaism, of Platonism, and of Stoicism. A religion could hardly claim nobler antecedents than these. But the modern critical estimate of the New Testament writings has, by proving the general trustworthiness of these documents, made it impossible to regard Christianity as the deliberate product of the philosophical schools of the second century. This, however, is not to deny that Greek philosophy has contributed, in no small degree, both to the doctrines and to the power of Christianity. In particular Christianity would certainly have been

weaker and poorer without the contribution of Platonism and of Stoicism. The Christian Fathers, Justin, Tertullian, and Clement, all recognize, and explicitly admit, the kinship between Christianity and Platonism ;¹ and, in modern times, Plato has been called (by Nietzsche) a Christian before Christ.

Plato's sincerity, the outstanding characteristic of all Greek philosophy, his desire to represent whatever he conceived to be the real truth about God, irrespective of mere sentiment,² strikes a note which is largely absent from the rivals of Christianity, but which was a conspicuous feature of the teaching of the historical Jesus. Plato confessed "that the Maker and Father of this universe is past finding out,"³ but he was convinced that God was not one who could be bribed with presents, as much contemporary religion seemed to assume. God is true in word and deed. He changes not, He deceives not.⁴ He is good ; not jealous.⁵ The man who rules himself is the friend of God.⁶ Our way of escape from the evil of mortal life "is to become like God as far as we can, and to become like Him is to become righteous, and holy, and not without wisdom."⁷ Plato was courageous enough to admit uncertainty, but it is to be noted that the uncertain

¹ "Some among us who are versed in ancient literature, have written books to prove that we have embraced no tenets for which we have not the support of common and public literature." (Tertullian.)

"We teach the same as the Greeks, though we alone are hated for what we teach." (Justin.)

"The teachings of Plato are not alien to those of Christ ; and the same is true of the Stoics." (Justin.)

"Heraclitus and Socrates lived in accordance with the divine Logos." (Justin.)

Clement affirms that Plato wrote by the inspiration of God. (Cf. *Legacy of Greece*, p. 31.)

² Cf. *Republic*, ii. 397.

⁴ *Rep.*, ii. 382c.

⁶ *Phædrus*, 248a ; *Laws*, iv. 716c.

³ *Timæus*, 28.

⁵ *Timæus*, 29e.

⁷ *Theætetus*, 176a.

element lay, for him, in the realm of theory and not in that of practice. "Nothing remains unshaken but the saying that to do injustice is more to be avoided than to suffer injustice, and that the reality and not the appearance of virtue is to be followed above all things." Few would deny that Plato's teaching figures largely in the outlook of the less emotional, more philosophical Christians of to-day. But such doctrine is never acceptable to the majority, who prefer rather to place themselves under any authority that professes to afford them the assurance of certainty in religion. In supplying this assurance of certainty, Christianity satisfied a need which Platonism could not meet.

When, in the third and second centuries B.C., Stoicism began to take on a religious tone, it found itself beset by the same disadvantage as Platonism; for Stoicism, too, refused to speak with that note of absolute conviction which alone can attract the masses. This refusal was due to the fact that Stoicism retained to the end its philosophical characteristic of a sincere adherence to truth; and the truth is, that religious certainty involves an exceptionally large subjective element. Consequently, Stoicism failed as a religion. The classic sayings of Seneca and Epictetus are every whit as noble as—in fact often almost identical with—the maxims of Jesus. Witness, for instance, the following examples: "We are God's offspring";² His "living temples";³ our duty is simply to follow God,⁴ and to be of one mind with Him.⁵ "God has a Father's mind towards the good and loves them strongly." "God provides all, sees all"; is "near you, with you, within you." "A holy spirit sits within

¹ *Gorgias*, 526.

² Epictetus, *Discourses*, i. 9, 13.

³ *Ibid.*, ii. 8.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, ii. 16.

us . . . our guardian.”¹ “None is good without God.”² The following is the Stoic statement of the golden rule: “We are members of a great body. Nature has made us of one blood, has implanted in us mutual love, has made us for society.”³ Or again, “We must love all men, even enemies, to the last end of life. It belongs to a great soul to despise injuries. Revenge is an inhuman word.”⁴ It is chiefly to the Stoics that we owe the doctrine of the equality of man. Seneca writes: “All of us have the same origin; no man is nobler than another save he who has a more upright character and one better fitted to honourable pursuits.”⁵ The God of Stoicism, in his personal manifestation, was practically a deification of a man’s unconscious. Since this is the outlook of much modern psychology, it is not surprising to find the latter repeating the methods of the Stoics. Seneca says⁶ that he feels himself “becoming better and becoming changed”—words which remind us of a popular saying of a modern exponent of auto-suggestion. Stoicism, however, in finding the secret of self-mastery in the exercise of the will (θέλημα) instead of in the imagination, does not appear to have discovered the “law of reversed effort.”⁷ The emphasis of Stoicism upon self-mastery and asceticism must have prepared the Gentile ground for that moral element in Christianity which it inherited from Judaism and which was largely absent from the oriental Mystery Religions. The following words of Epictetus sound the same note as the teaching of Jesus with regard to the necessity of putting the curb upon the thoughts and not merely upon the actions:

¹ Seneca, *Ep.*, xli. 1, 2.

² Epictetus, *Discourses*, i. 9.

³ Seneca, *Ep.*, xcv.

⁴ Quoted by Brace, *Unknown God*, p. 138.

⁵ *De Ben.*, iii. 28.

⁶ *Ep.*, vi. 1.

⁷ Cf. Baudouin, *Suggestion and Auto-Suggestion*, p. 116.

"The true ascetic is he who disciplines himself against all suggestion of evil desire. An object of desire comes into sight; wait, poor soul; do not straightway be carried off your feet by it; consider the contest is great and the task is divine; it is for kingship, for freedom, for calm, for undisturbedness. Think of God; call Him to be your helper and to stand by your side, as sailors call upon Castor and Pollux in a storm; for yours is a storm, the greatest of all storms; the storm of strong suggestions that sweep reason away."¹ It was such Greek thought as this that "saved the better Romans from the effect of oriental superstitions."²

Stoicism, with its emphasis upon self-control and equanimity in the fortunes and misfortunes of life, with its spirit of beneficence balanced by detestation of weak and mawkish sentimentalism, with its veneration for natural law and its recognition of social duty and the equality of man, has always fired the admiration of noble minds. As a gospel it failed, because noble minds are few. Perhaps the same may be said of Platonism and of the teaching of Jesus. But none of these three has been lost to mankind. As Dean Inge asserts in his essay on "Religion" in *The Legacy of Greece*, "the Hellenistic combination of Platonic metaphysics with Stoic ethics is still the dominant type of Christian religious philosophy."³

Influence of the Mystery Religions.

The Mystery Religions were popular in the days of Plato. "Those who established our Mysteries," he says in the *Phædo*, "declare that all who come to

¹ *Discourses*, ii. 18.

² Cf. Glover, *Progress in Religion*, p. 289.

³ *Op. cit.* p. 45.

Hades uninitiated will lie in the mud ; while he who has been purified and initiated will dwell with the gods." More than seven hundred years later, the governor of Achaia wrote to the emperor Valentinian that life for the Greeks would become unbearable if, as the Christian emperor was proposing, the celebration of the Eleusinian Mysteries were forbidden. The Mysteries represented "the chief factor in the religious life of the old world";¹ they were "Das letzte Wort der heidnischen Religionen."² With such a long and notable record it was inevitable that their influence upon early Christianity should be immense.³

We have already described how the various Oriental Mysteries had been introduced into the heart of the Empire. When St. Paul began his missionary labours, the Mysteries of Eleusis, Dionysos, and Orpheus, in Italy, Greece, and Asia Minor, were supplemented by those of Attis, Serapis, Osiris, Isis, Mithra, and other Eastern deities, as well as by minor private cults, which in many cases were little more than burial clubs.⁴

The spirit which animated the Mystery Religions was at the opposite pole to that which prevailed in Greek philosophy. The philosopher's search was for truth. The mystic sought to save his soul, and the Mystery Religions were able, by their rites, to create the conviction that this had been done. "The Mysteries gave men and women what they supposed

¹ Lafaye, *Histoire du Culte des Divinités d'Alexandrie*, p. 108.

² De Jong, *Das antike Mysterienwesen*, p. 9.

³ "Wenn auf das älteste Christentum," says Professor Clemen, "nicht durch Vermittlung des Judentums, sondern direkt, überhaupt andere Religionen eingewirkt haben, so ist das in erster Linie von der griechisch-römischen und genauer von der der Mysterien zu erwarten." (*Op. cit.*, p. 1.)

⁴ Jevons, *Introduction to History of Religion*, p. 336.

to be revelations of the god, and by exciting certain feelings inspired them to believe that their immortal happiness was assured.”¹ We have seen in Chapters IX.-XII. something of the crude beginnings of these cults. Their prevailing tone was originally immoral—or at least non-moral—and emotional. Emotional the Mystery Religions always remained, but they had, before their contact with Christianity, acquired a somewhat moral character. In Greece, their touch with philosophy over a period of some centuries had exercised upon them an ennobling moral influence. Thus Aristophanes says: “For we have a Sun and a holy Light, we who have been initiated and live towards friends and strangers as dutiful and pious persons.”² And he denominates the uninitiated as “those who had wronged strangers, maltreated parents, and sworn false oaths.”³ There is evidence that a similar moral tone attached to the Mysteries among the Romans. In Virgil’s sixth book of the *Æneid* the pious Æneas descends into Hades, where he is initiated by the Cumæan Sibyl in order to fit him for his divine task. There he learns from Anchises’ Shade the need of repeated purification and penance through a series of births and deaths in order that the soul may become free from sin and attain to final bliss. Even in the Eastern Mystery Religions, the punctilious performance of the sacred rite did not count for everything, nor did the state of the mystic’s heart count for nothing.⁴ The following prayer—no doubt from an

¹ Glover, *Progress in Religion*, p. 174.

² *Frogs*, 454 f.

³ *Ibid.*, 148 f.

⁴ “Dass am Opfer nicht die Gabe, sondern die Erhebung des Herzens zu Gott das wichtige ist, hat auch im Orient an verschiedenen Stellen frommer Sinn erkannt.” (Reitzenstein, *op. cit.*, p. 25.)

actual liturgy — which Lucius is represented as addressing to Isis in Apuleius' story of "the Golden Ass," gives us some idea of the sublime heights to which the Mystery Religions could rise: "Thou who art the holy and eternal Saviour of mankind, ever bountiful to the mortals who cherish thee, thou bestowest thy gracious Mother-love upon the wretched in their misfortunes. No day, . . . no brief moment, ever passes without thy benefits. On land and sea thou watchest over men, and holdest out to them thy saving right hand, dispelling the storms of life. Thou dost undo the hopelessly ravelled threads of Fate, and dost alleviate the tempests of Fortune, and restrainest the hurtful courses of the stars. . . . As for me, my spirit is too feeble to render thee worthy praise, and my possessions too small to bring thee fitting sacrifices. I have no fluency of speech to express in words that which I feel of thy majesty. Therefore will I essay to do that which a poor but pious worshipper can. Thy divine countenance and thy most holy presence will I hide within the shrine of my heart. There will I guard thee, and continually keep thee before my spirit." ¹ The vitality of such faith is not to be questioned. But there is a danger which is never absent from an emotional type of religion. The periods of elation and power are frequently followed by periods of despondency and weakness. Such failure is unbearable. The psychic stress which it generates tends to split up the personality, so that it may escape its sense of inferiority by attaining amnesia for the lower unacceptable experiences. Especially is this so in the case of neurotic temperaments where the elements of con-

¹ *Metam.*, xi. 25.

sciousness are already but loosely associated. This tendency was recognized and provided against in certain doctrines of the Mystery Religions. They taught that the man who had been blessed with a vision of God (*i.e.* who had been initiated) never thereafter actually sinned, but only appeared to do so. He was no longer to be identified with his earthly body. His real self was independent of this, indeed of all earthly things, fate and law included.¹ Such a divorce of morality from religion constituted to the last a fatal flaw in any ethical teaching which the Mystery Religions might impart; and the better minds, from Plato to Paul, always condemned it. "Shall Pataikion, the brigand," asks Diogenes, "because he was initiated, fare better after death than Epameinondas?"² Paul himself, in certain passages—for example, in Galatians v. 18, "If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the Law"—appears to be influenced by the doctrine of the Mystery Religions, which taught that the divine revelation rendered the initiate free. With the apostle, however, such "freedom" was not to be used as an "occasion for the flesh" (Gal. v. 13); and being "led by the Spirit" meant something more than ecstasy or "glossolalia," namely a life that produced "the fruit of the Spirit," and—as he adds in Galatians v. 23—"against such there is no law." The importance of moral conduct, upon which Judaism laid such stress, and the necessity of individual religious experience, which the Mystery Cults emphasized, were thus both preserved by Christianity, which, indeed, seems to have possessed the power of appropriating and incorporating all that was best in the religions with which it came into contact. In spite

¹ Cf. *H.M.R.*, p. 44.

² *Lærtius*, vi. 39.

of what can be quoted to the contrary,¹ we cannot regard the Mystery Religions as having an ethical influence of much value. They represented a union of emotional beliefs enforced by sacramentalism. In tendency they were really monotheistic. In outlook they transcended nationality, and—except when a greedy priesthood made the cost of higher initiation prohibitive—they promoted brotherhood and equality. In doctrine they each promised personal salvation and immortality by means of sacramental union with their Saviour-God (θεὸς σωτήρ), who had suffered as a man upon earth and had won the victory against the spiritual foes who beset his initiated followers. The doctrines of Christianity, as they are represented in the Pauline Epistles and as they have been understood by all but a small section of theologians, manifest the closest parallels with these teachings of the Mystery Religions. The doctrines of Greek philosophy and those of Judaism contain nothing of a similar character. What even those Jews who show a tendency towards Hellenism thought of the Mystery Religions may be gathered from the Book of Wisdom. In their opinion the Mysteries were the outcome of idolatry and emotion (xiv. 15), and resulted in immorality of the worst description (xiv. 22 f.). The idea of sacramental union with a suffering Redeemer-God, a union which conveys freedom and immortality, is absolutely foreign to Judaism and to the teaching of Jesus. The thesis that the Old Testament supplies a perfectly adequate explanation of the ideas and images in the epistles of St. Paul² is one which cannot be convin-

¹ E.g. Apuleius, *Metam.*, xi. 19 et al.

² Kennedy, *Paul and the Mystery Religions*, p. viii.

cingly maintained. It is possible to emphasise Paul's insistence upon morality and upon a right subjective attitude on the part of the believer as being conditions of salvation. It is possible to lay stress on the fact that certain ideas which are found in Paul's Epistles and in the Mystery Religions—such as ideas about the divine spirit or about cathartic ritual—are common to many religions. It is possible to speak of merely “a certain kinship of imagery.” But the truth remains that St. Paul's religious convictions after his conversion are not expressed in the language of Judaism. On the other hand, they do find expression in words and ideas which—as every probability goes to show—are to be paralleled in contemporary Mystery Religions. The Christian Church of the second century—1800 years nearer to St. Paul's day than we are now—undoubtedly regarded the apostle's teaching (*e.g.* on the subject of the sacraments), as identical with that of the Mystery Religions, and they accused the latter of copying Christianity.¹ “It is useless to deny,” says Dean Inge, “that St. Paul regarded Christianity, at least on one side, as a Mystery Religion. Why else should he have used a number of technical terms which his readers would recognize at once as belonging to the mysteries? Why else should he repeatedly use the word ‘mystery’ itself, applying it to doctrines distinctive of Christianity, such as the resurrection with a ‘spiritual body,’ the relation of the Jewish people to God, and, above all, the mystical union between Christ and Christians?” The great “mystery” is “Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Col. i. 27). It was as a mystery religion that Europe accepted Christianity. Just as the Jewish Christians

¹ *E.g.* Justin Martyr, 1 *Apol.* 66; and *cf.* Chap. XII.

took with them the whole framework of apocalyptic Messianism, and set the figure of Jesus within it, so the Greeks took with them the whole scheme of the mysteries, with their sacraments, their purifications and fasts, their idea of a mystical brotherhood, and their doctrine of "salvation" (*σωτηρία* is essentially a mystery word) through membership in a divine society, worshipping Christ as the patron Deity of their mysteries."¹ That Europe should have accepted Christianity as a Mystery Religion is in itself highly probable, since the majority of converts had been brought up in this type of faith and "such ideas helped to create a ready demand for the mystic side of Christianity."² But that St. Paul should have adopted their language and—to some extent—their doctrines is less easily accounted for. Mr. Montefiore suggests that the pessimistic influence of the type of Judaism which prevailed among the western diaspora was the main factor that caused the apostle to break away from the religion of his upbringing. Reitzenstein finds the cause, not in the weakness of Judaism, but in the subtle influence of the atmosphere of the Mystery Religions. He submits that these—with their contrasts between earthly and heavenly, bodily and spiritual—introduce us into the general mood of the times in which a mighty experience tore a religious genius (*eine religiösshöpferische Natur*) from his previous state of bondage and enabled him to rise to true self-realization.³ The "mighty experience" which overtook Paul on the Damascus road has been described by William James as "the process by which

¹ *Outspoken Essays*, vol. i. p. 227.

² Cf. Johnston, *Some Alternatives to Jesus Christ*, p. 135.

³ *H.M.R.*, pp. 54, 185.

a self, hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities.”¹ The language which we find in the “Hermetic Literature” could, perhaps, better than any other, effectively express this change; and, since Paul must certainly have met these modes of thought at Tarsus and the great cities of the empire, it is not unnatural that he should have adopted them.

We conclude that the Mystery Religions have had an important influence upon Christian doctrine. Outside the sphere of doctrine, the effect of these sects was felt in the preparation which they made for the individual and non-national outlook that Christianity inculcated. And further, in building up cults or clubs in which equality and brotherhood were prominent features, the Mystery Religions helped to promote that type of community which was adopted by the earliest Christian Churches in the West.

¹ *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 189.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHRISTIANITY AND MODERN THOUGHT

OUR study of the influences upon Christianity might be extended further. For instance, an investigation of the history of the development of baptism would reveal a very similar incorporation of pagan ideas into the Christian rite as was found in the case of the eucharist. After a short time baptism is no longer connected—as it was by the first generation of Christians—with the gift of the Holy Spirit.¹ The ritual becomes more complicated, the importance of the act itself is emphasised, and the state of the believer's heart is no longer the paramount factor. By the third century A.D., baptism is generally regarded as a magic rite which cancels past sin. As a consequence of this belief, it becomes the rule to administer baptism shortly before death. Constantine delayed being baptized until the end of his life.

This adoption of conceptions which prevailed in paganism is but typical of the general method pursued by Christianity in its development. After the Jewish element, with its expectation of an immediate parousia, had ceased to be of any weight in the Church, Christianity spread largely by absorbing the religious ideas of those who had come over from heathenism and then investing them in Christian guise. Instances of this

¹ The very earliest Christians, in Palestine at least, probably regarded baptism as a preparation for the Messianic kingdom.

have been mentioned in the preceding chapters. Other examples, such as the worship of local (pagan) saints, the observance of particular places and seasons as sacred, and the existence of many strange rites and customs which may be found, even to-day, masquerading in Christian dress, are described by such writers as Sir J. G. Frazer.¹ But in proportion as Christianity thus gained in breadth it lost in fervour. As early as the middle of the second century the enthusiasm and purity that characterized the initial years of the Christian Church had disappeared, and the efforts of Tertullian and the Montanists to regain them were unavailing. Orthodoxy replaced love and self-sacrifice. God was thought of as a metaphysical, rather than as a spiritual being. "The Christian association became more secret than before. At first there is no indication of secrecy. It was preached to the world. The bar to admission was a moral one. Its rites were simple. Later, this was changed. Doctrines and rites have risen which must not be declared in the hearing of the uninitiated."² Christianity thus established itself as a religion, in which the beliefs of the Eastern and Hellenistic Mystery Cults, the doctrines of Judaism, and those of Greek Philosophy were the main constituents. These were eventually modified and codified by Catholic theology, and the Church's economy was thenceforth administered by an organization

¹ Cf. *G.B.*, "Dedication of holy candles" (p. 3); "Greek hero Hippolytus = the Christian saint of the same name" (p. 5); "The retaining of Palm Sunday leaves" (p. 125); "John Baptist Day celebrations = those of Roman midsummer festival" (p. 154). The ringing of bells to conjure or to exorcise spirits (pp. 195, 568) may be compared with the Christian "passing bell" and the ringing of a bell at the elevation of the "host." The heathen custom of periodically expelling the powers of evil is still observed by the Christians of Albania (p. 560). Cf. *Folk-Lore in O.T.*, pp. 446-452.

² Hatch, *Influence of Greek Ideas and Usages upon the Church*, p. 293.

which was modelled upon, and was quite as despotic as, the orientalized Roman Empire, which had now passed away.

History and Comparative Religion thus indicate that Christianity, as it exists to-day, contains much which, if it were now being stated for the first time, would be expressed in very different terms. Indeed, our whole estimate of the value of the various elements in Christianity deserves reconsideration in the light of modern psychology. Recent advances in this science have enabled us to understand, to a degree hitherto impossible, religious phenomena and the rationale of religious processes. Many of the occurrences which, down to the last few decades, have been assigned to the agency of external spiritual beings are now traced to the subconscious activity of the individual. An example, which is of peculiar interest to the student of religion, is the case of "sudden conversion." It has been shown *by experiment* that the subconscious is capable of intelligent constructive imagination, of reasoning, of volition, of purposive effort; and that it can, by means of hallucinatory symbolism (through voices and visions), address messages to the consciousness.¹ Psychology has also thrown a new light upon those superstitious beliefs which—as we have seen—prevailed so universally among primitive peoples, and which still permeate much professing Christianity.² Such superstitions as are commonly connected with various objects, events, or chance actions still seem to retain as strong a hold upon humanity—even in the case of the more cultivated—as do the verities of

¹ Cf. *Journal of Abnormal Psychology*, 1906, "The Psychology of Sudden Conversion"; Morton Prince, *The Dissociation of a Personality*, pp. 344, 564; *The Unconscious*, pp. 193 ff., 223 ff.

² Cf. Freud, *Psychopathology of Everyday Life*, pp. 308-310.

Religion. Few have learned to distinguish external chance, which can tell a man nothing about himself ; and internal chance (*i.e.* faulty and accidental actions) which—as psychology shows—can reveal much about the individual's subconscious life. Such revelations seem to play the prophet to those who have no conscious knowledge of the motivation of psychic accidentalness ; and, because of this ignorance, external contingency is credited by them with the same apocalyptic powers. This confusion between unconscious knowledge and conscious ignorance provides apparent justification for many current superstitions.

Another feature of the pagan contribution to Christianity which can receive a juster estimate in the light of modern psychology, is its sacramental teaching. The effectiveness of this sacramentalism is to be explained by the fact that these rites constituted a potent means of sowing the seeds of suggestion in the converts' unconscious minds. Judaism and the earliest disciples of Jesus, in regarding such acts as symbolic of spiritual truths rather than as mysterious and automatic means of getting into touch with the Deity, attained a similar end by a more direct and enlightened method.

Not only can psychology teach us about the genesis of the revelations upon which the Mystery Religions insisted, about the growth of superstitions and myths, and about the process underlying their sacraments ; it also enables us to understand why religion has played such a large part in the history of man's development. The problem of life, as viewed by this science, is to ensure that the "libido," the *élan vital* (as Bergson would term it), is released in ways that are socially useful. Instinctively—as we have noticed in our

introductory chapters—the energy of primitive man tends to expend itself in the acts of nutrition and reproduction. In the crude nature-cults which underlie most early religions we can see these two acts in the process of being given a religious significance. As humanity becomes more self-conscious, energy (“libido”) is diverted from these two fundamental acts and used, by means of magic and religious exercises, to create confidence in man who increasingly feels himself ever to be standing in the shadow of the unknown. This process of transformation of the “libido” into higher channels is termed “sublimation,” and religion is the principal agent in facilitating it. Dr. Oskar Pfister has contributed to our knowledge of religious sublimation by his book *Die Frömmigkeit des Grafen Ludwig von Zinzendorf*. Zinzendorf was an only child, and, owing to the death of his father when he was an infant and the remarriage of his mother less than four years later, his childish emotions were almost denied their usual outlet. He was brought up in an ultra-pious environment, and his affections—finding no adequate human object—fixed themselves upon Jesus, to whom he used, at the age of seven, to write notes and throw them out of the window. As Zinzendorf reached manhood this early fixation led to an incomplete sublimation of the “libido,” *i.e.* to repression. The result of this repression clearly appears in the count’s writings, which manifest an unpleasant confusion of sexual and religious ideas.¹ Just as a study of the embryo, and particularly of cases of retarded development, reveal the stages in man’s physical evolution, so an investigation of pheno-

¹ Cf. especially Zinzendorf’s doctrine of the “Seitenhöhlchen,” and his conception of the “Abendmahl” as “eine typische Repräsentation für die Kohabitation” (pp. 56 f. and 76 f.), an idea which is found in the Mystery Cults.

mena of this kind discloses the path along which the human religious instinct has developed.

Even the most exalted religious ideas that have come down to us go back to primitive and fundamental instincts in human nature. An appreciation of this fact involves no degradation of the ideas themselves and should make men tolerant. It is as unreasonable to hope for a religion free from all traces of the lower stages of its evolution as it is to expect to find a human body without such relics as the vermiform appendix. When an appendix endangers physical life a surgical operation may be expedient. And when an unhealthy sentimentalism or semi-magical conceptions threaten to stifle all true religion, a protest—perhaps even a schism and a reformation—may be necessary. But normally we may expect progress in religion to take place without resort to such drastic methods. One essential condition is a discrimination between the sublime and the primitive elements in all that passes for religious faith, so that the treasures which should be given to true religion are not poured into the foreign lap of superstition. In proportion as this distinction is recognized and acted upon, patience will have her perfect work and the light will shine more and more unto the full day.

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